My Little Monster

Robico

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THE WILL TO WIN

Shizuku's mother gives her advice about having it all, success in studies and success in love. All it takes is effort! But it's not only Shizuku who exerts the effort. Oshima reaffirms her love for Haru, and Natsume continues her hopeless assault on Mitchan's heart. And Yamaken struggles to overcome his own arrogance to make an earnest attempt at prying Shizuku away from Haru. So much effort from so many people, will anyone have the energy to actually be happy?

Includes special extras after the story!

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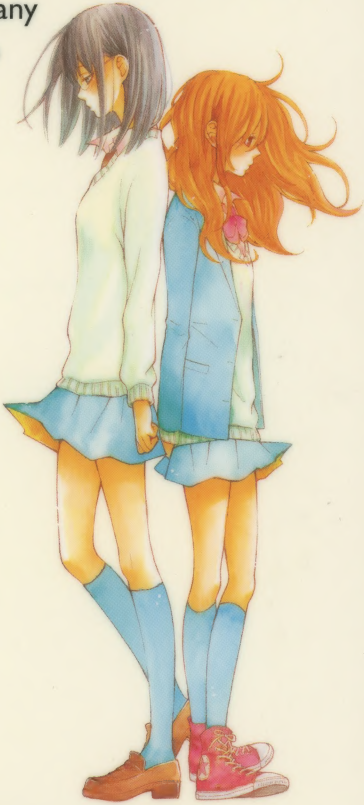

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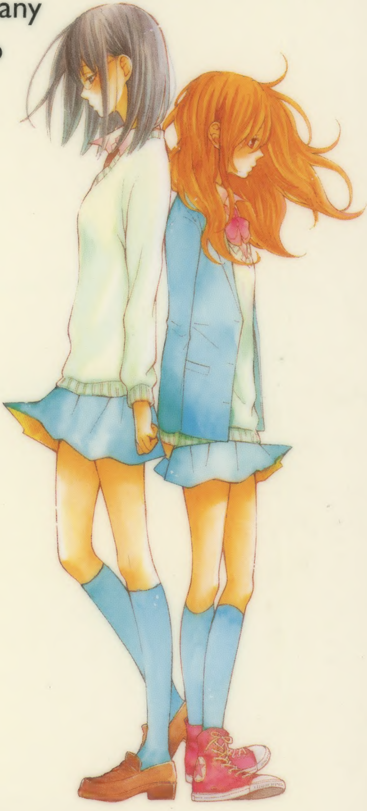

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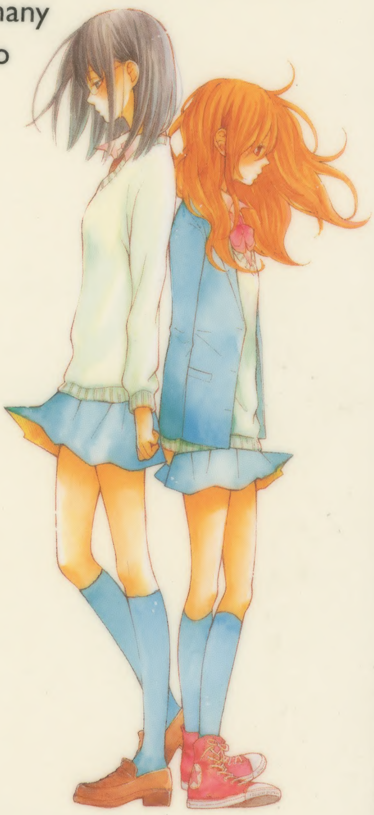

My Little Monster

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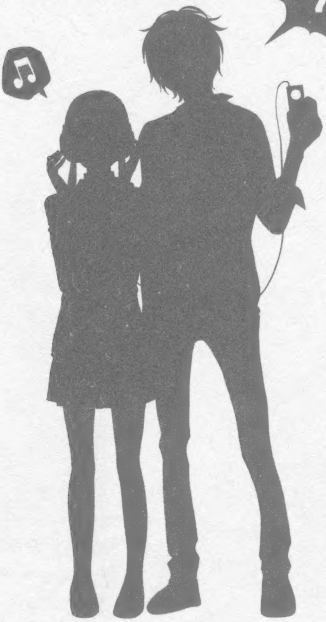

Robico

STORY

When Shizuku Mizutani does a favor for problem child Haru Yoshida, who sits next to her in school, he develops a huge crush on her. Attracted to his innocence, she eventually falls for him, too, but when she asks him out, he inexplicably turns her down. Shizuku temporarily locks away her romantic feelings. Then she starts to change by facing people more assertively, and she tells Haru again that she likes him. Her confession goes right over his head this time, but when Haru visits her house on Valentine's Day, which also happens to be her birthday, Shizuku's love for him grows, and she boldly confesses her feelings for him one more time. It should have gotten through to him this time, but...?

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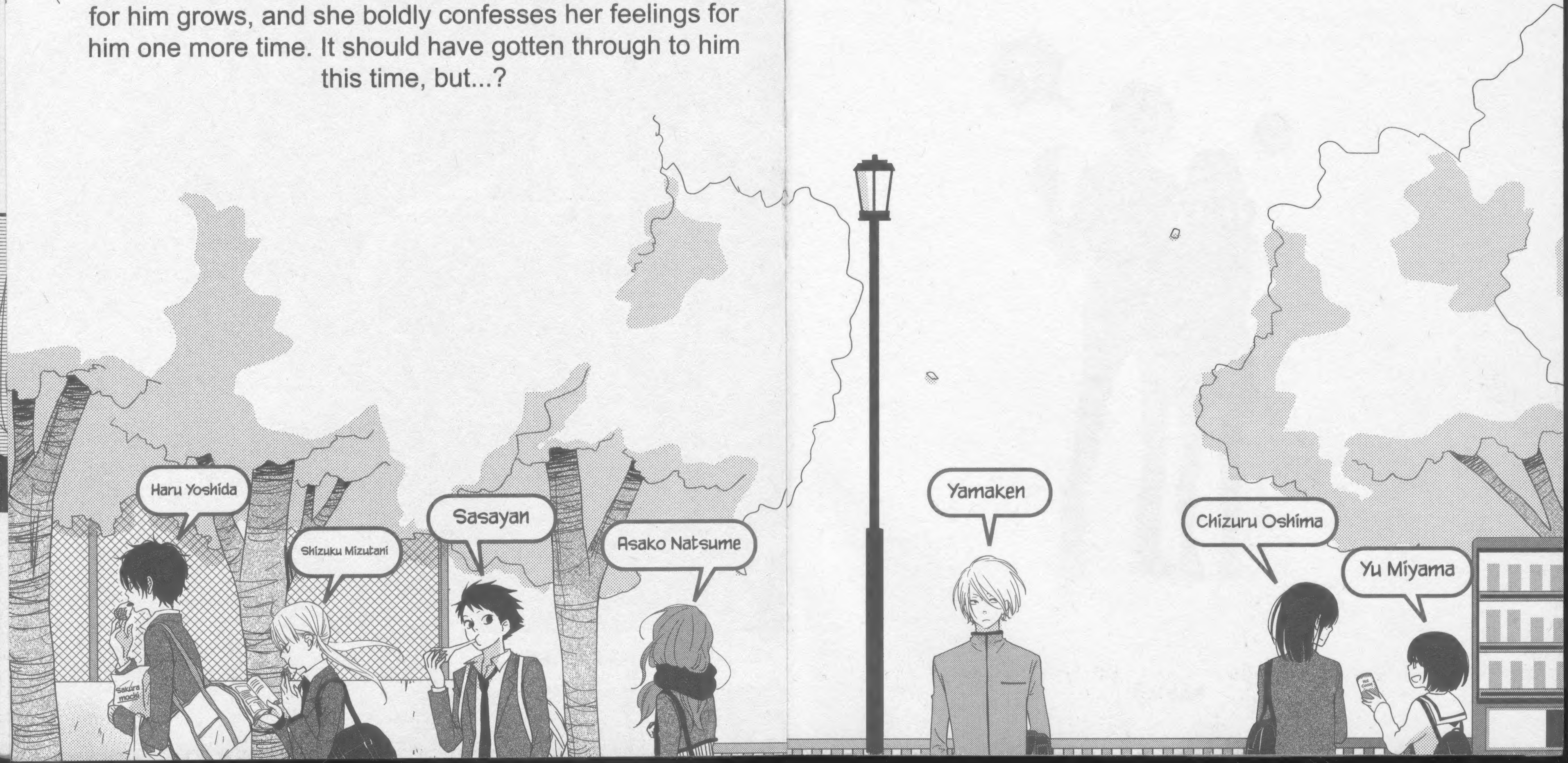
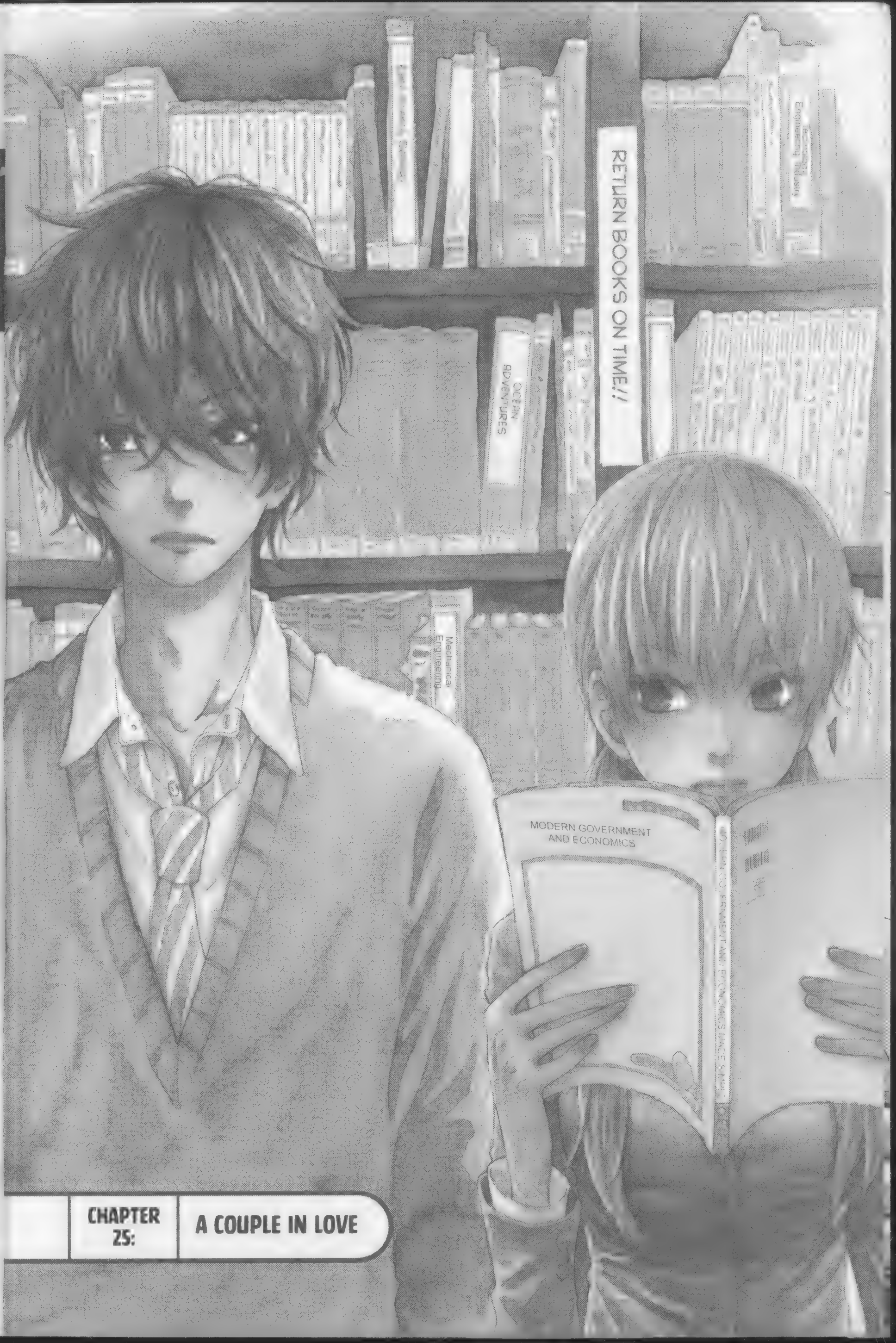
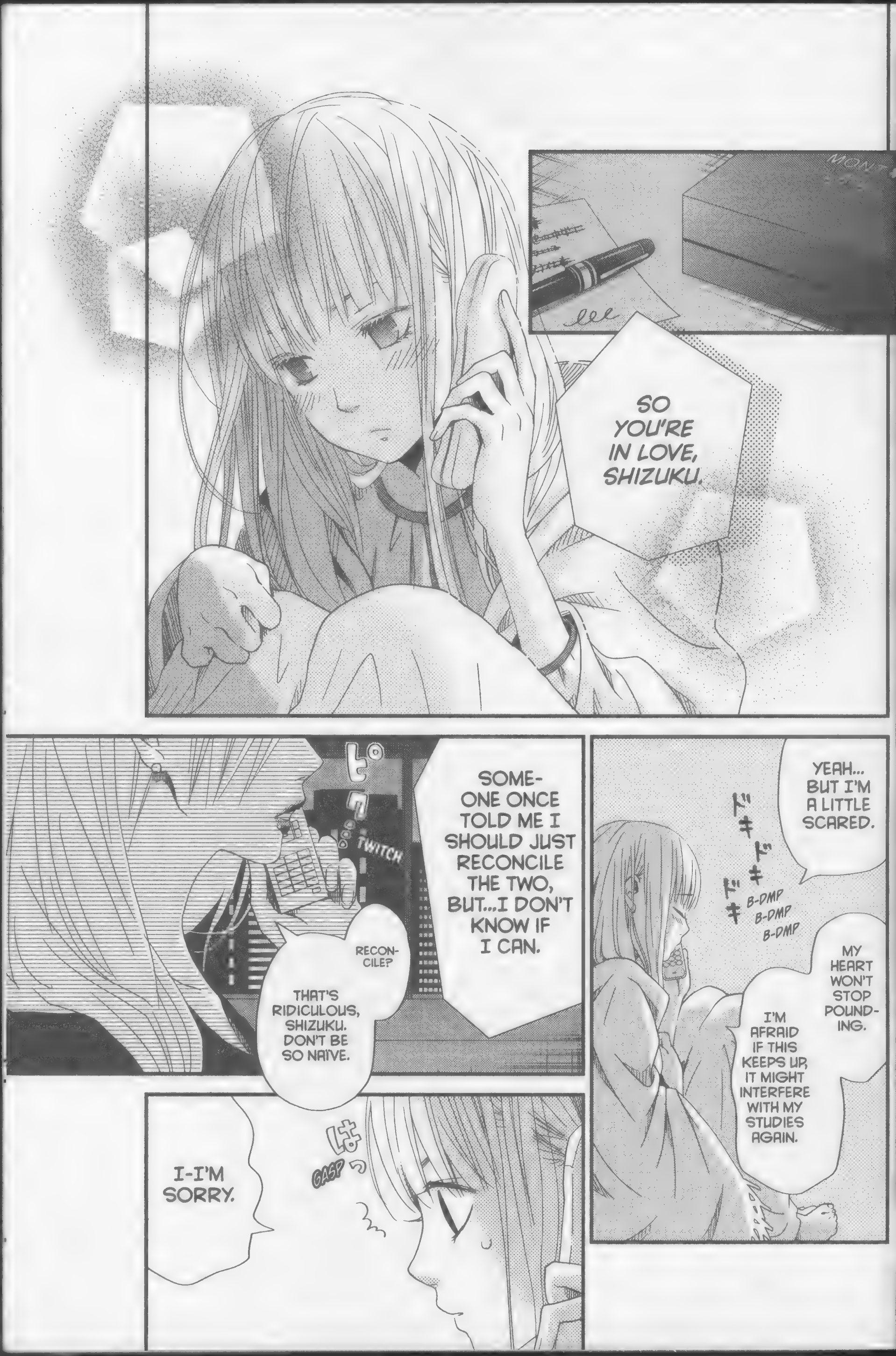
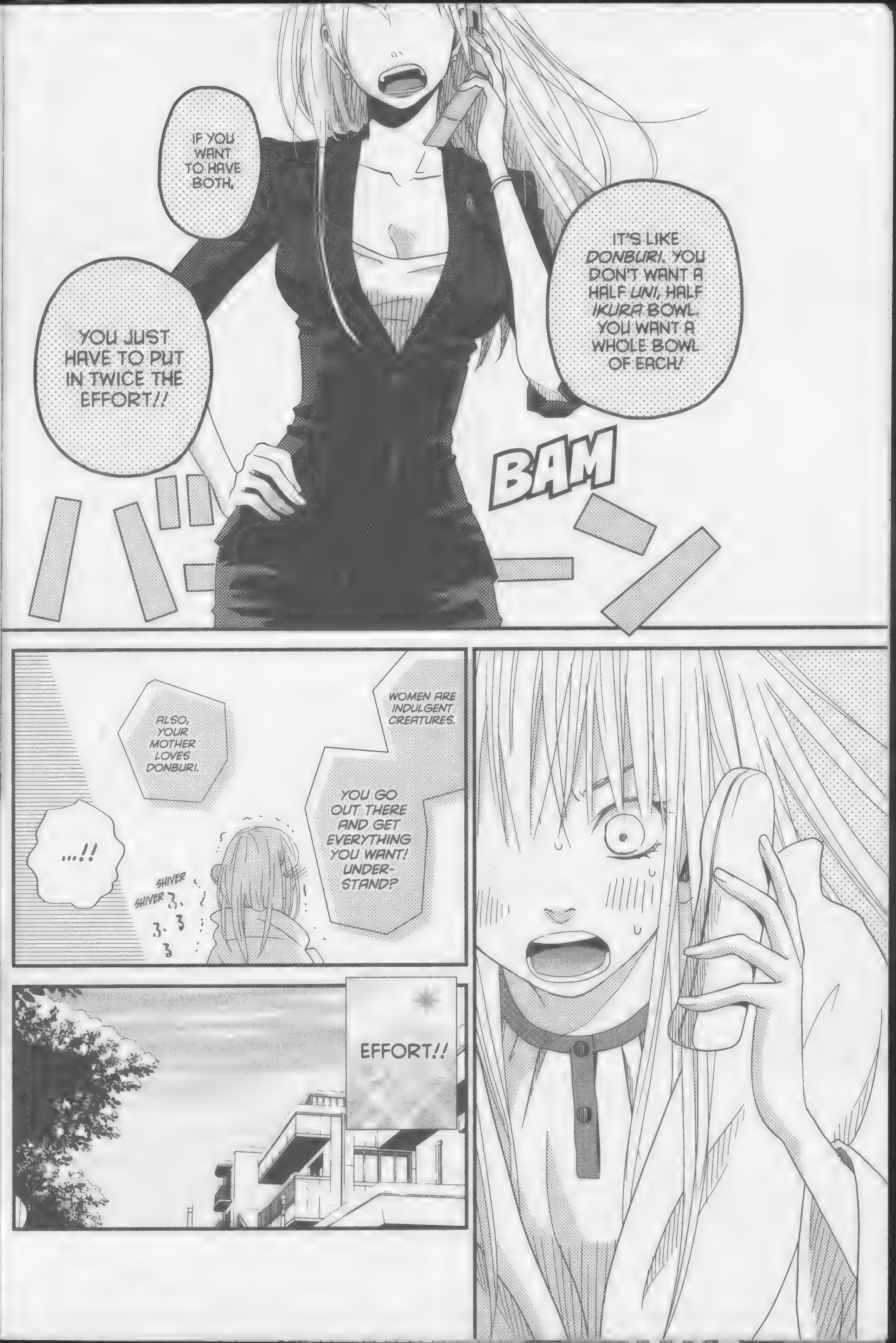
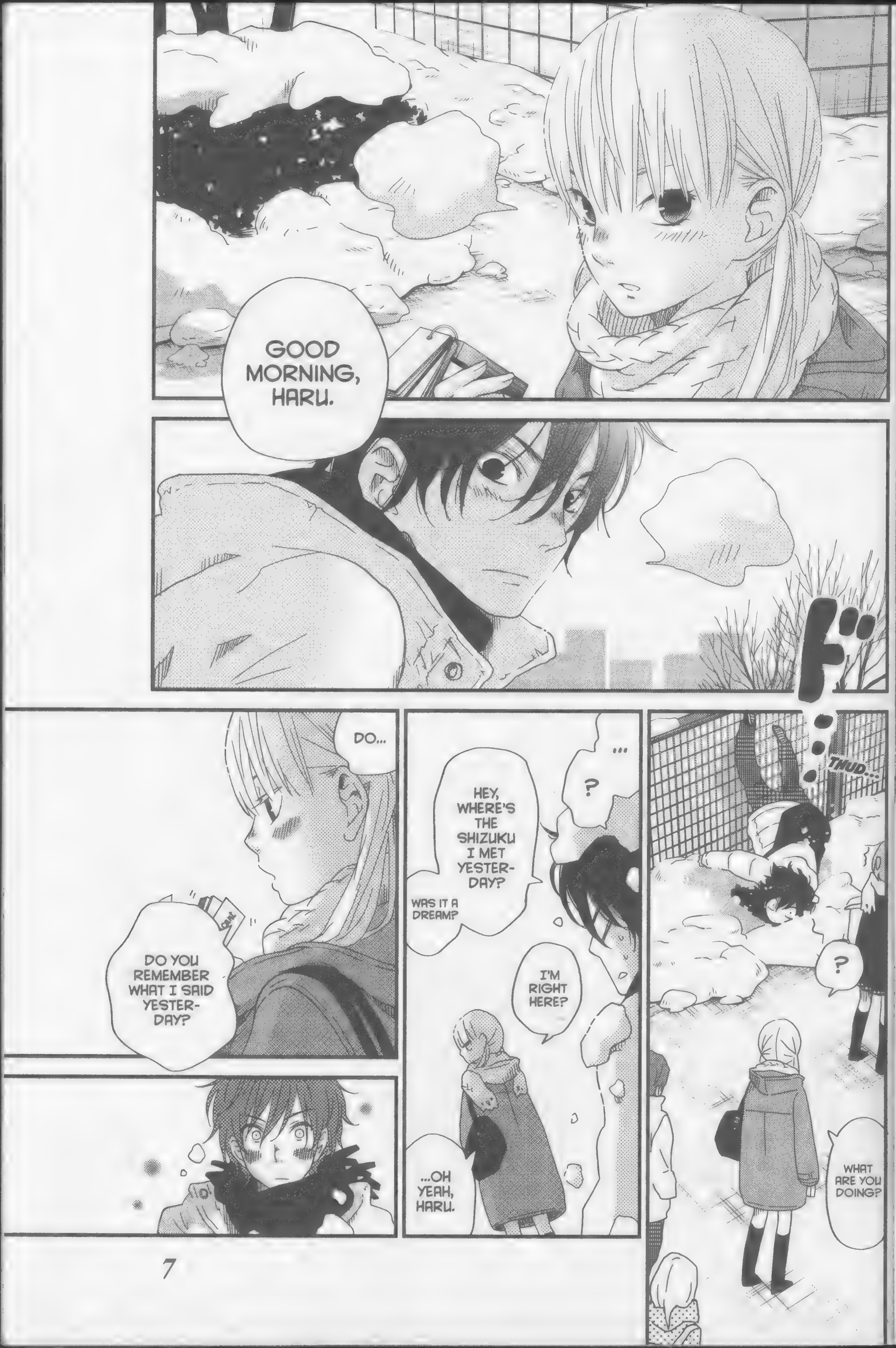

Haru Yoshida
Shizuku Mizutani
Sakura mochi
Sasayan
Asako Natsume
Yamaken
Chizuru Oshima
Yu Miyama

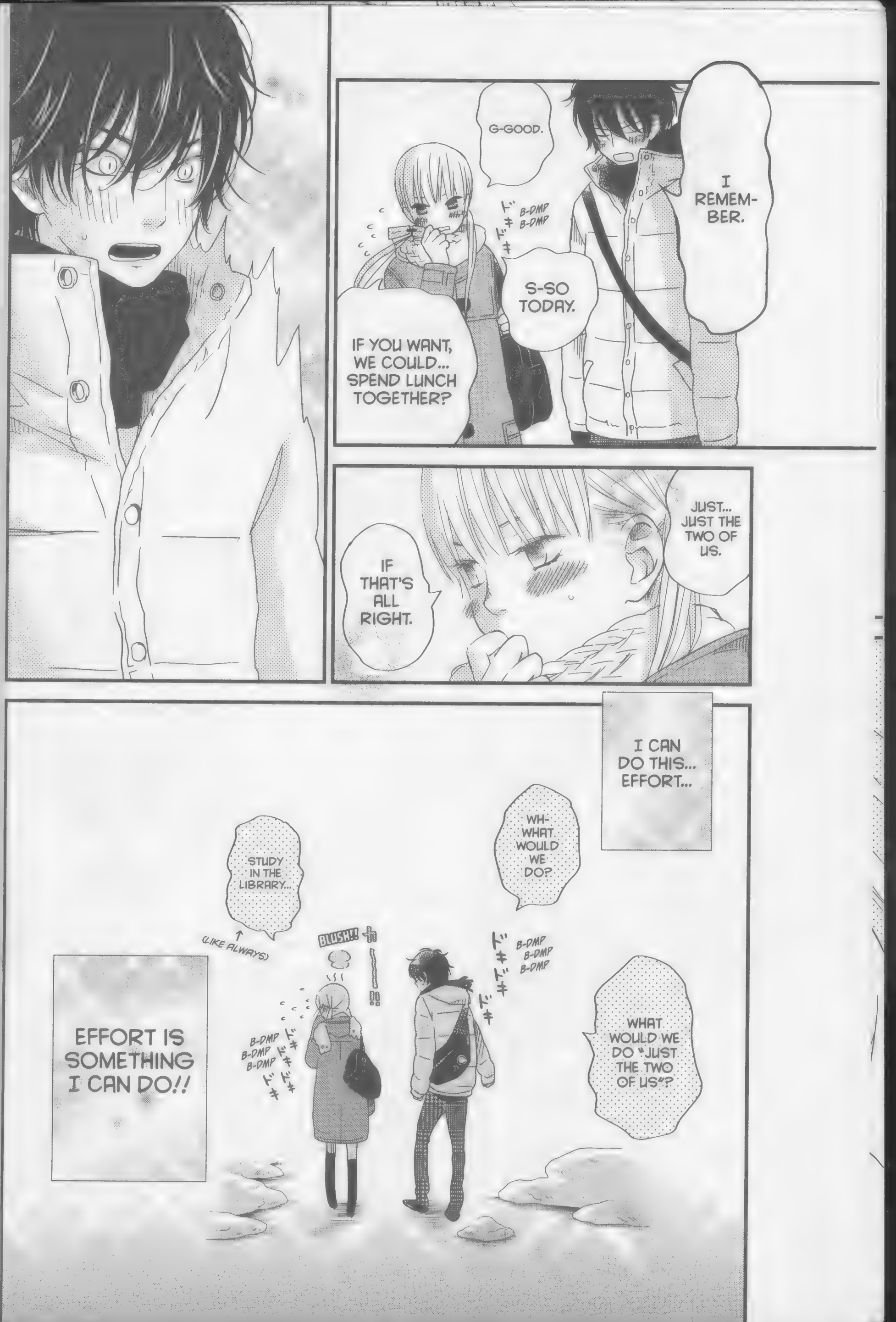

RETURN BOOKS ON TIME!!
OCEAN ADVENTURES
Mechanical Engineering
MODERN GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMICS

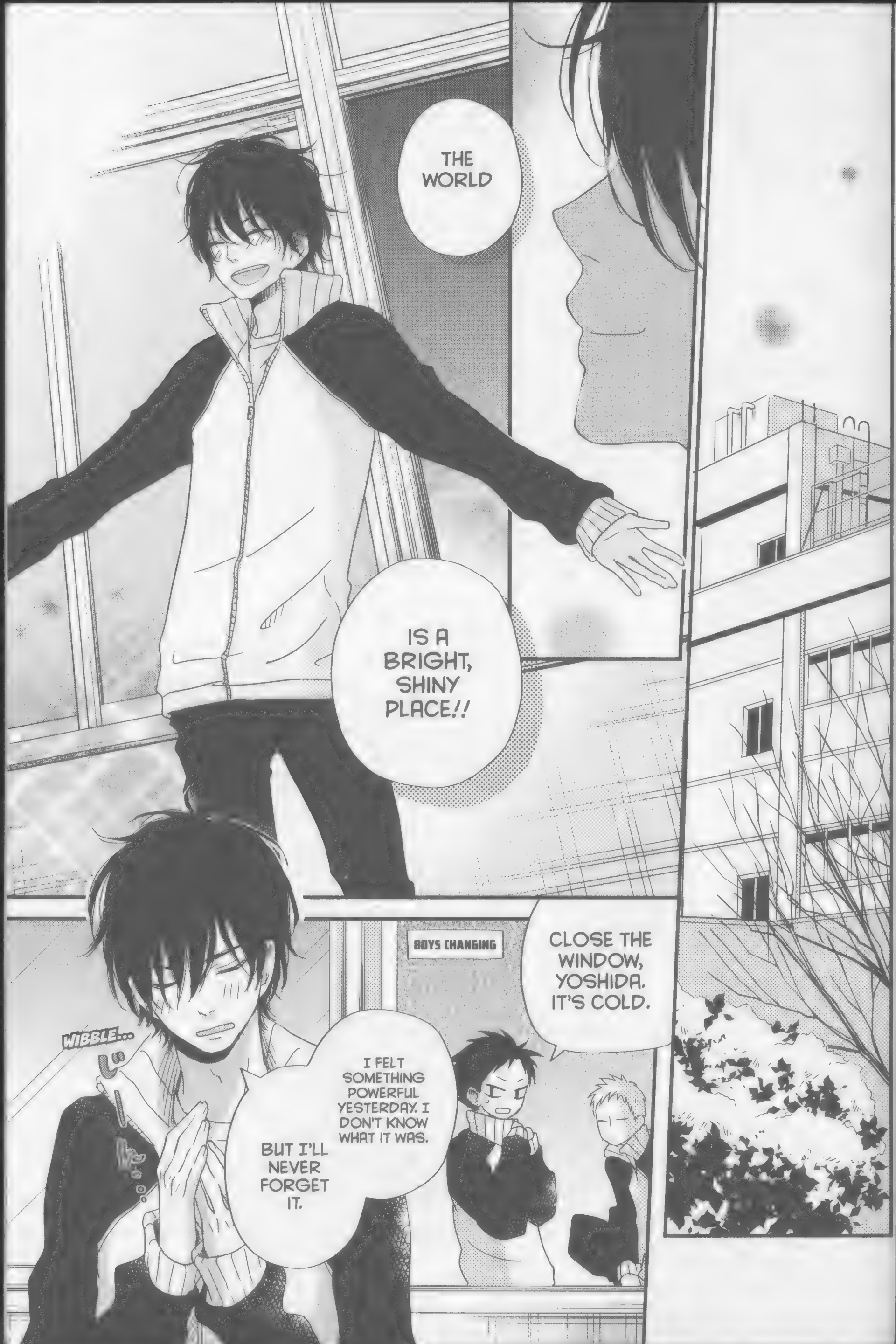
CHAPTER 25: A COUPLE IN LOVE

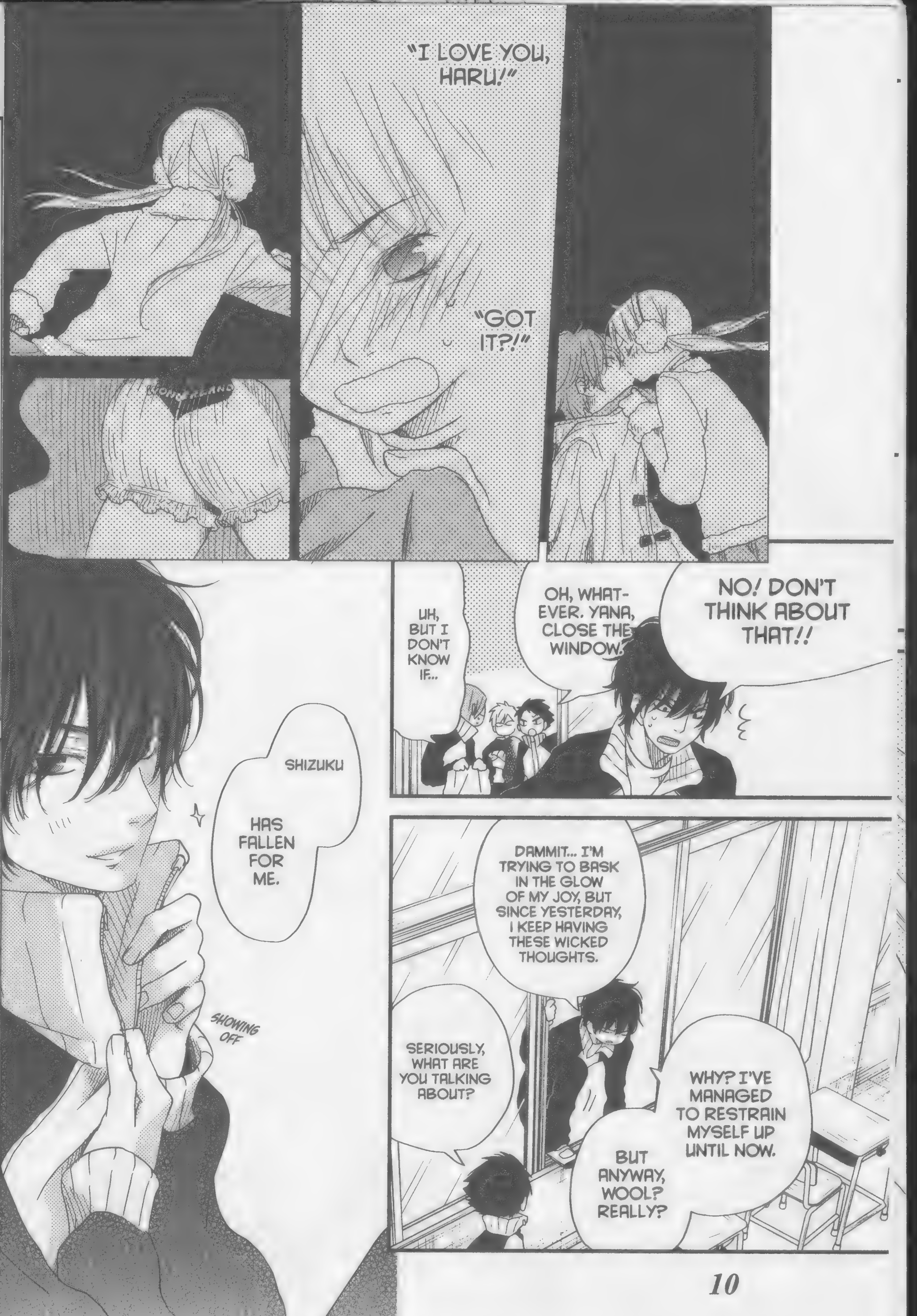

SO YOU'RE IN LOVE, SHIZUKU.
YEAH... BUT I'M A LITTLE SCARED.
ドキドキドキ B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
MY HEART WON'T STOP POUNDING.
I'M AFRAID IF THIS KEEPS UP, IT MIGHT INTERFERE WITH MY STUDIES AGAIN.
ピク TWITCH
SOME-ONE ONCE TOLD ME I SHOULD JUST RECONCILE THE TWO, BUT...I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.
RECON-CILE?
THAT'S RIDICULOUS, SHIZUKU. DON'T BE SO NAIVE.
はっ GASP
I-I'M SORRY.

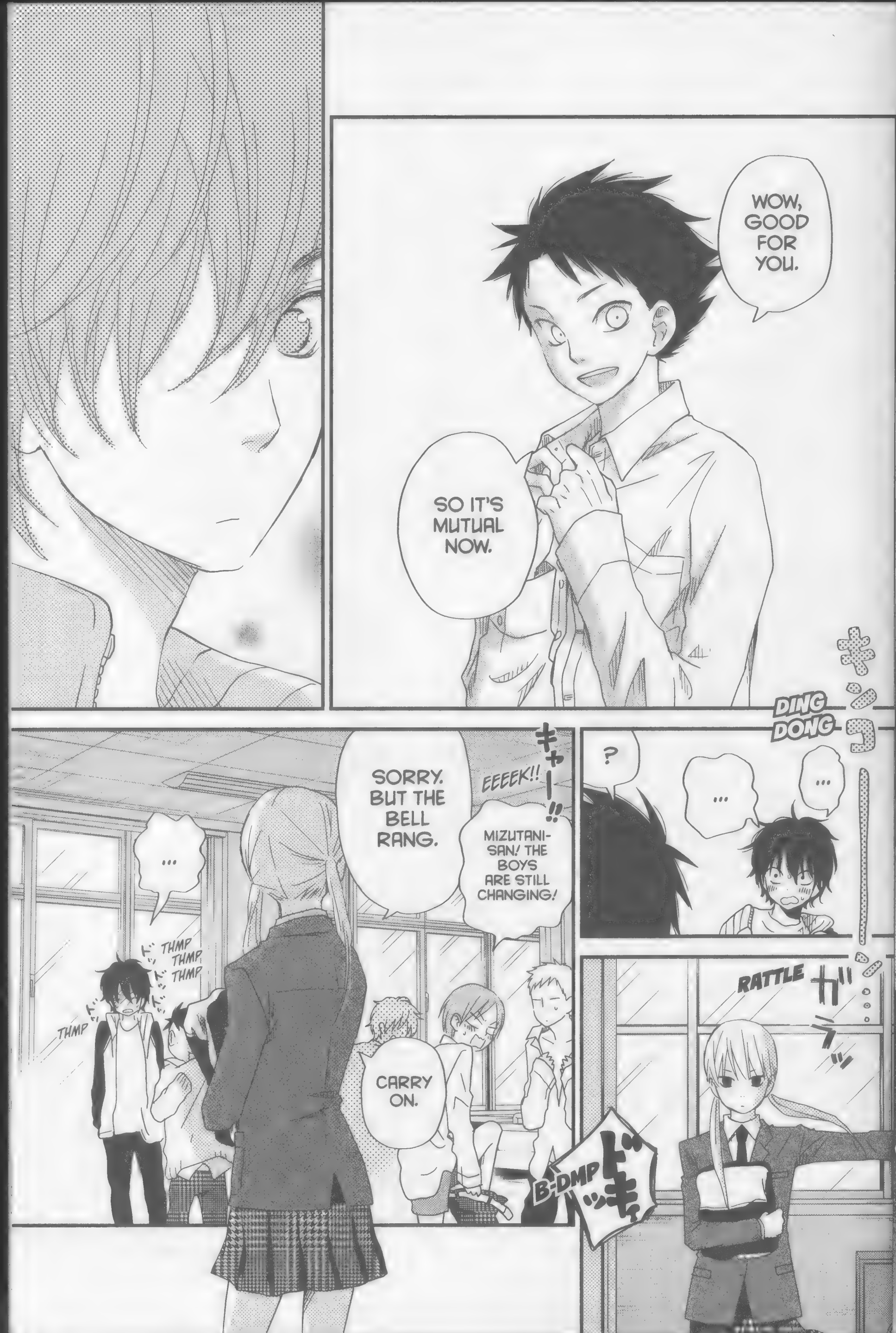

IT'S LIKE *DONBURI*. YOU DON'T WANT A HALF *UNI*, HALF *IKURA* BOWL. YOU WANT A WHOLE BOWL OF EACH!
IF YOU WANT TO HAVE BOTH,
YOU JUST HAVE TO PUT IN TWICE THE EFFORT!!
BAM
WOMEN ARE INDULGENT CREATURES.
YOU GO OUT THERE AND GET EVERYTHING YOU WANT! UNDERSTAND?
ALSO, YOUR MOTHER LOVES DONBURI.
...!!
SHIVER
SHIVER
EFFORT!!

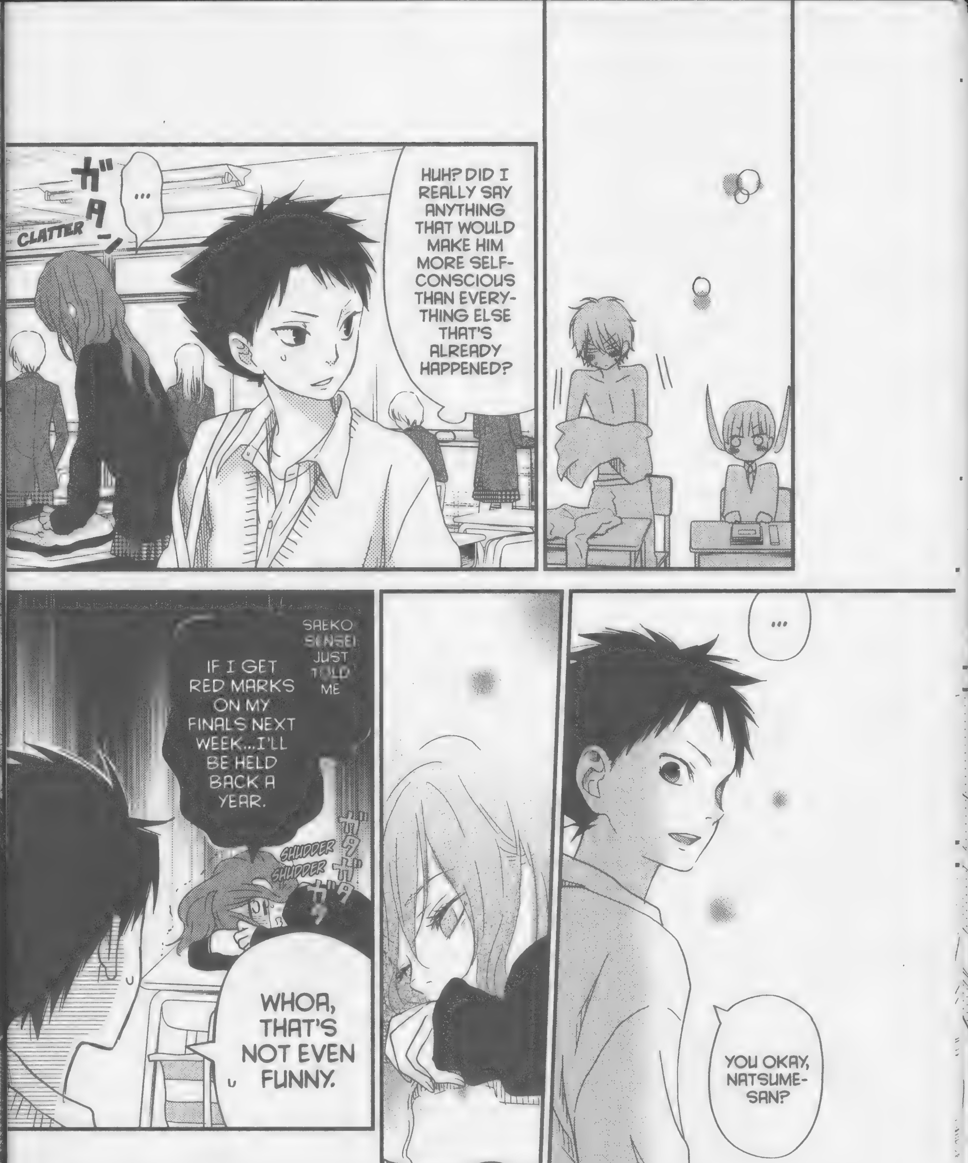

GOOD MORNING, HARU.
ド
THUD...
?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
...
?
HEY, WHERE'S THE SHIZUKU I MET YESTERDAY?
WAS IT A DREAM?
I'M RIGHT HERE?
...OH YEAH, HARU.
DO...
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I SAID YESTERDAY?

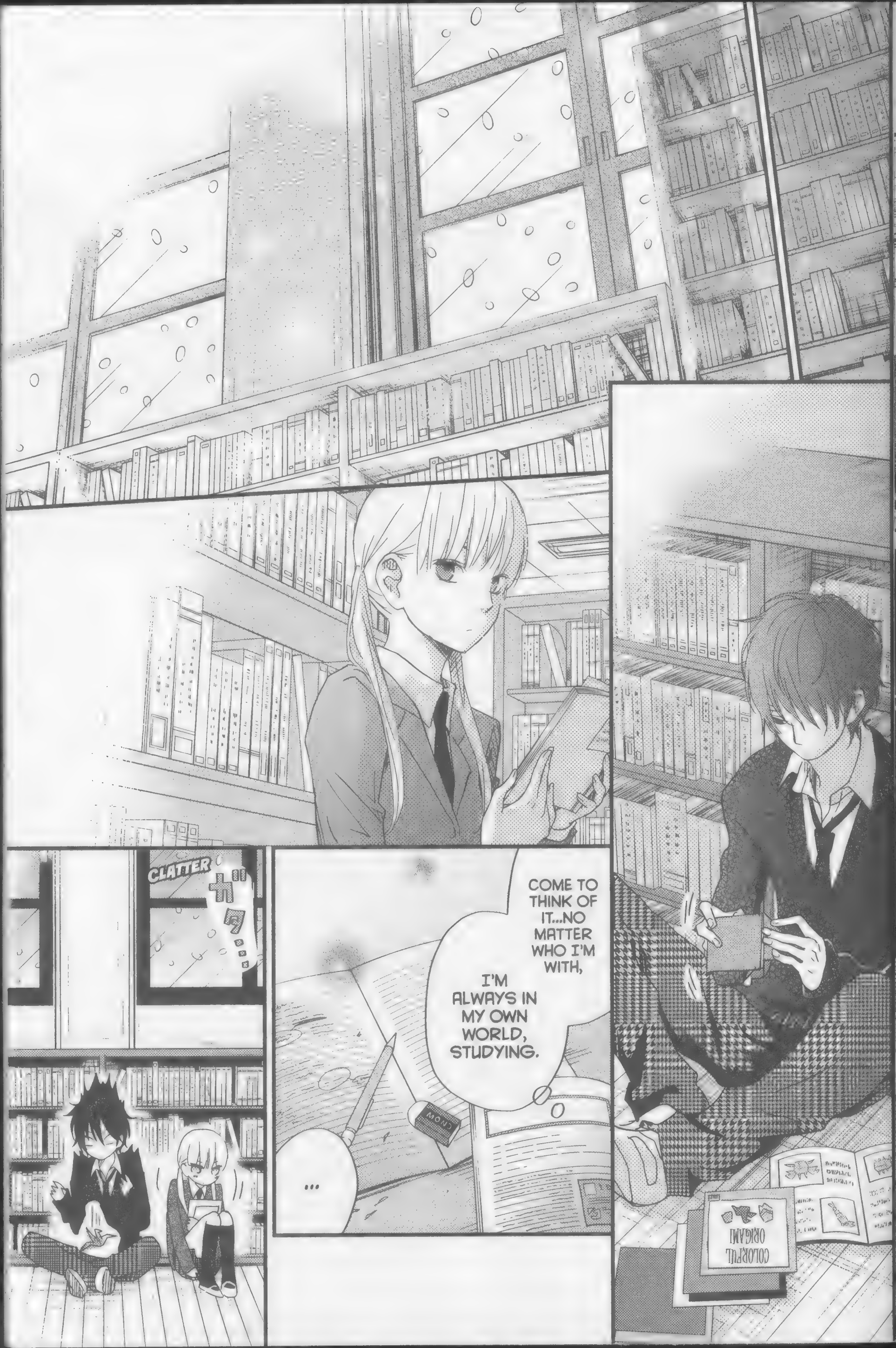

I REMEMBER.
G-GOOD.
B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキ
S-SO TODAY.
IF YOU WANT, WE COULD... SPEND LUNCH TOGETHER?
JUST... JUST THE TWO OF US.
IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
I CAN DO THIS... EFFORT...
WH-WHAT WOULD WE DO?
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキ
WHAT WOULD WE DO "JUST THE TWO OF US"?
STUDY IN THE LIBRARY...
(LIKE ALWAYS)
BLUSH!!
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキ
EFFORT IS SOMETHING I CAN DO!!

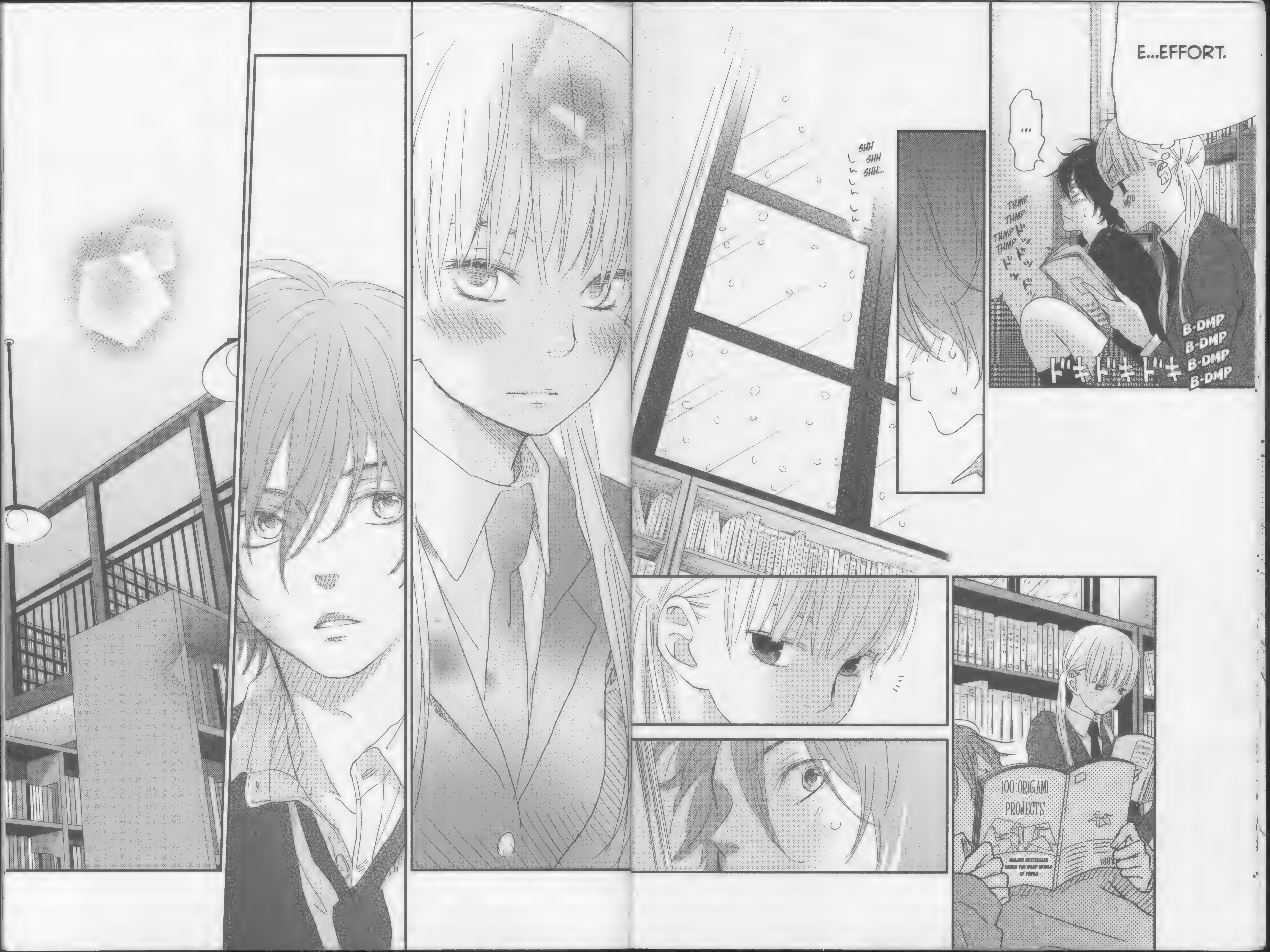

THE WORLD
IS A BRIGHT, SHINY PLACE!!
BOYS CHANGING
CLOSE THE WINDOW, YOSHIDA. IT'S COLD.
I FELT SOMETHING POWERFUL YESTERDAY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.
BUT I'LL NEVER FORGET IT.
WIBBLE...

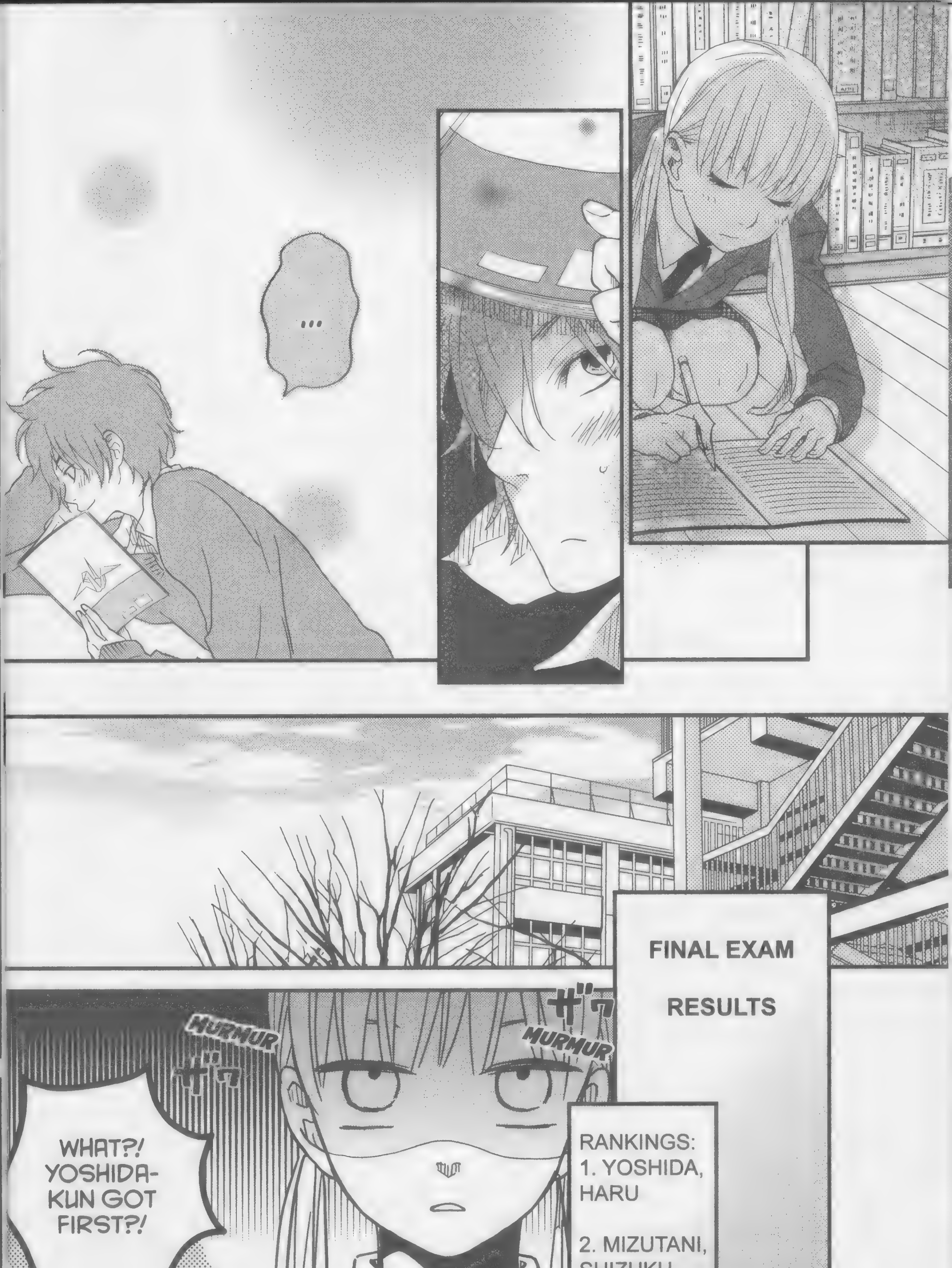

"I LOVE YOU, HARU!"
"GOT IT?!"
NO! DON'T THINK ABOUT THAT!!
OH, WHAT-EVER. YANA, CLOSE THE WINDOW.
UH, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF...
SHIZUKU HAS FALLEN FOR ME.
SHOWING OFF
DAMMIT... I'M TRYING TO BASK IN THE GLOW OF MY JOY, BUT SINCE YESTERDAY, I KEEP HAVING THESE WICKED THOUGHTS.
WHY? I'VE MANAGED TO RESTRAIN MYSELF UP UNTIL NOW.
SERIOUSLY, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
BUT ANYWAY, WOOL? REALLY?

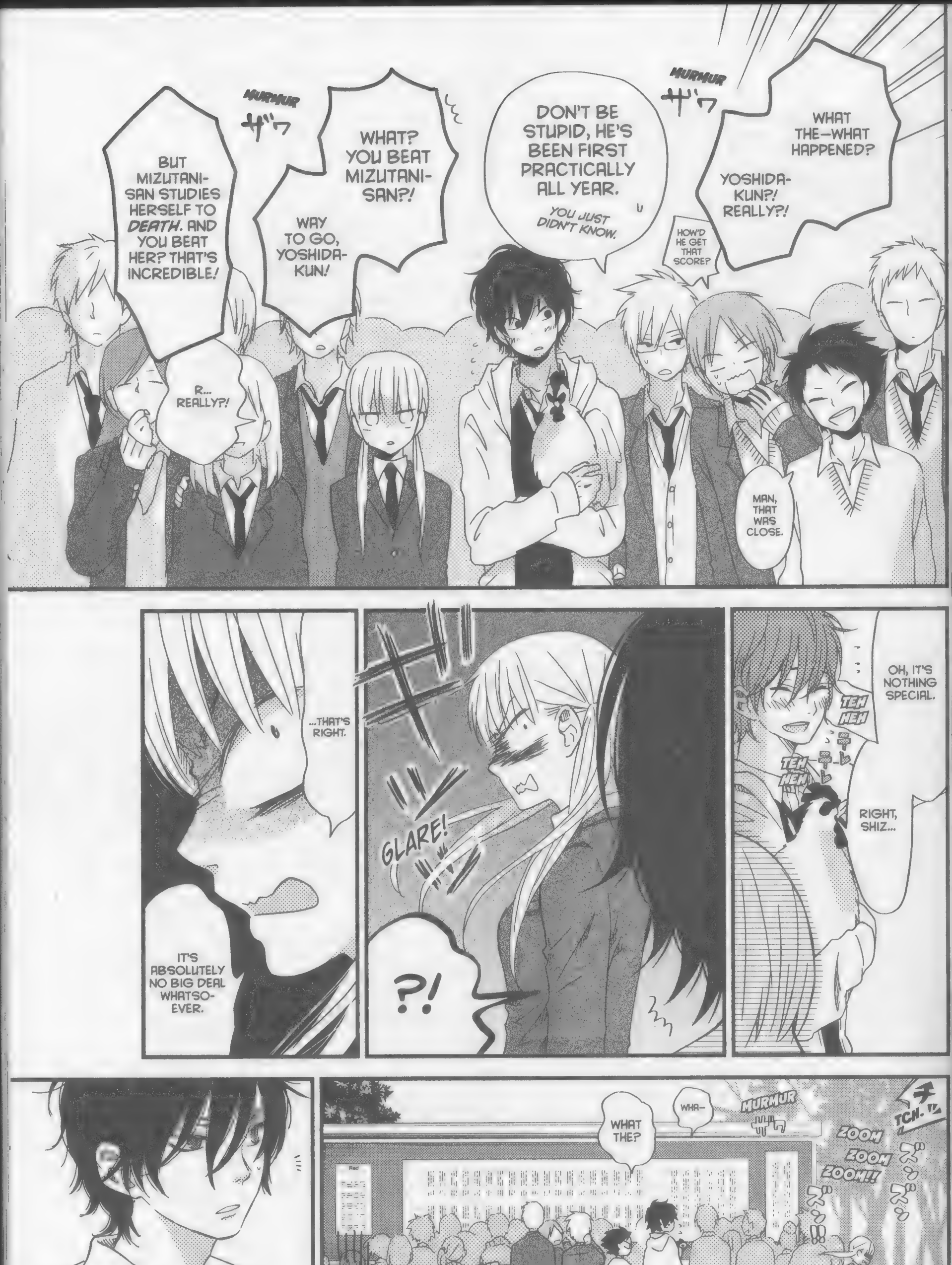

WOW, GOOD FOR YOU.
SO IT'S MUTUAL NOW.
キンコン
DING DONG
?
...
...
ガラッ
RATTLE
ドキッ
B-DMP
SORRY. BUT THE BELL RANG.
キャー!!
EEEEK!!
MIZUTANI-SAN! THE BOYS ARE STILL CHANGING!
...
CARRY ON.
THMP THMP THMP
THMP

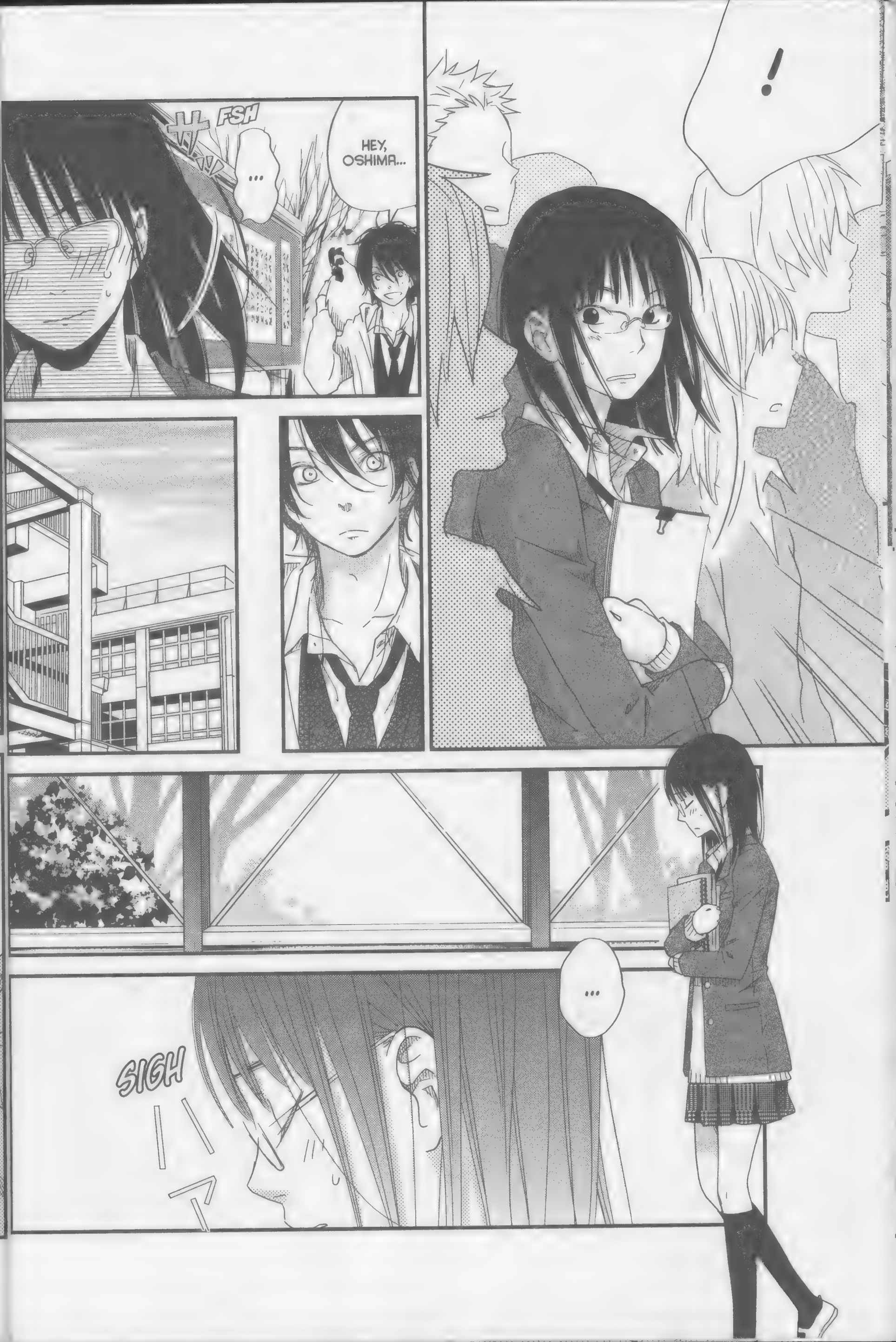

HUH? DID I REALLY SAY ANYTHING THAT WOULD MAKE HIM MORE SELF-CONSCIOUS THAN EVERYTHING ELSE THAT'S ALREADY HAPPENED?
...
ガタン
CLATTER
...
YOU OKAY, NATSUME-SAN?
SAEKO-SENSEI JUST TOLD ME
IF I GET RED MARKS ON MY FINALS NEXT WEEK...I'LL BE HELD BACK A YEAR.
ガタガタガタ
SHUDDER SHUDDER
WHOA, THAT'S NOT EVEN FUNNY.

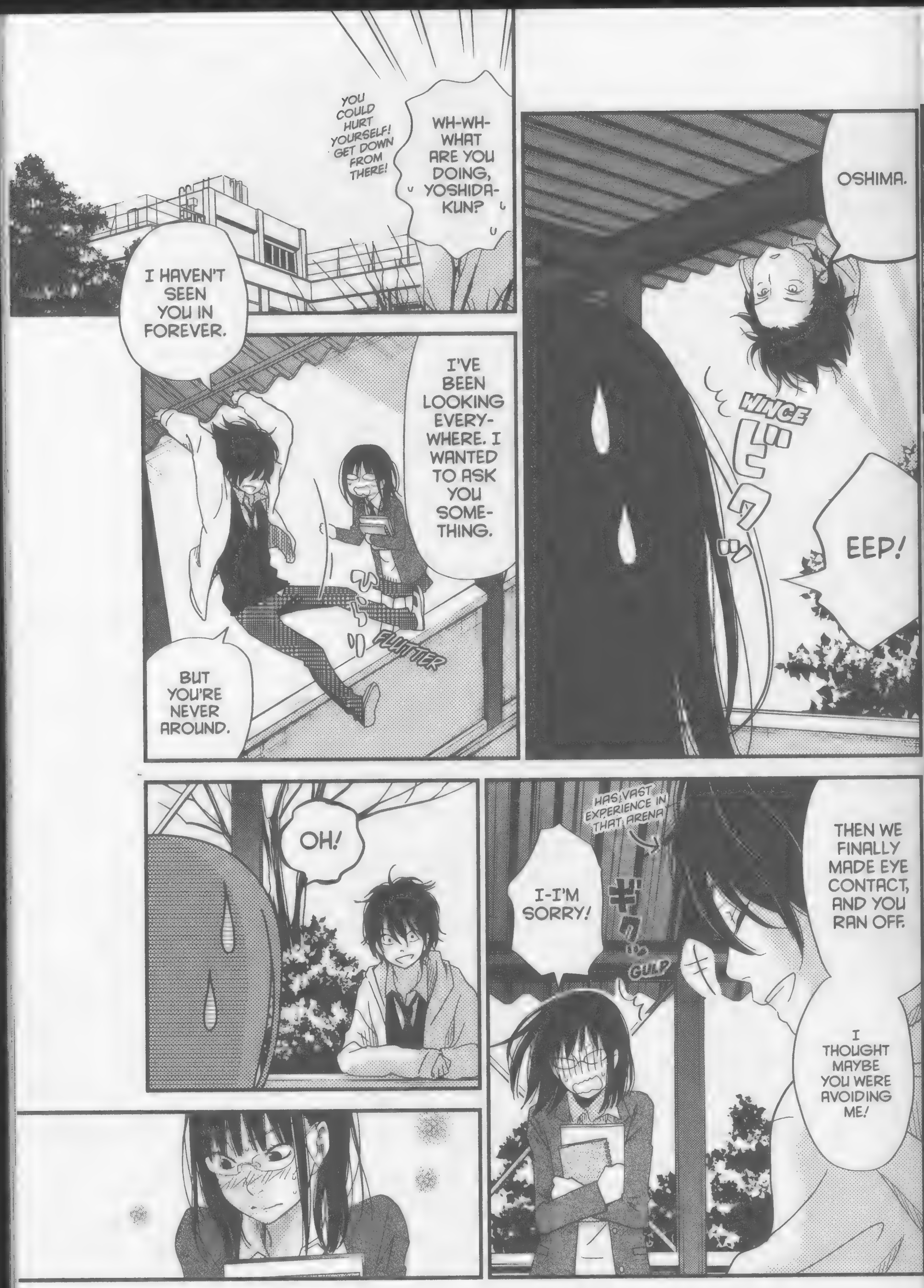

COME TO THINK OF IT...NO MATTER WHO I'M WITH,
I'M ALWAYS IN MY OWN WORLD, STUDYING.
...
COLORFUL ORIGAMI
ガタ...
CLATTER

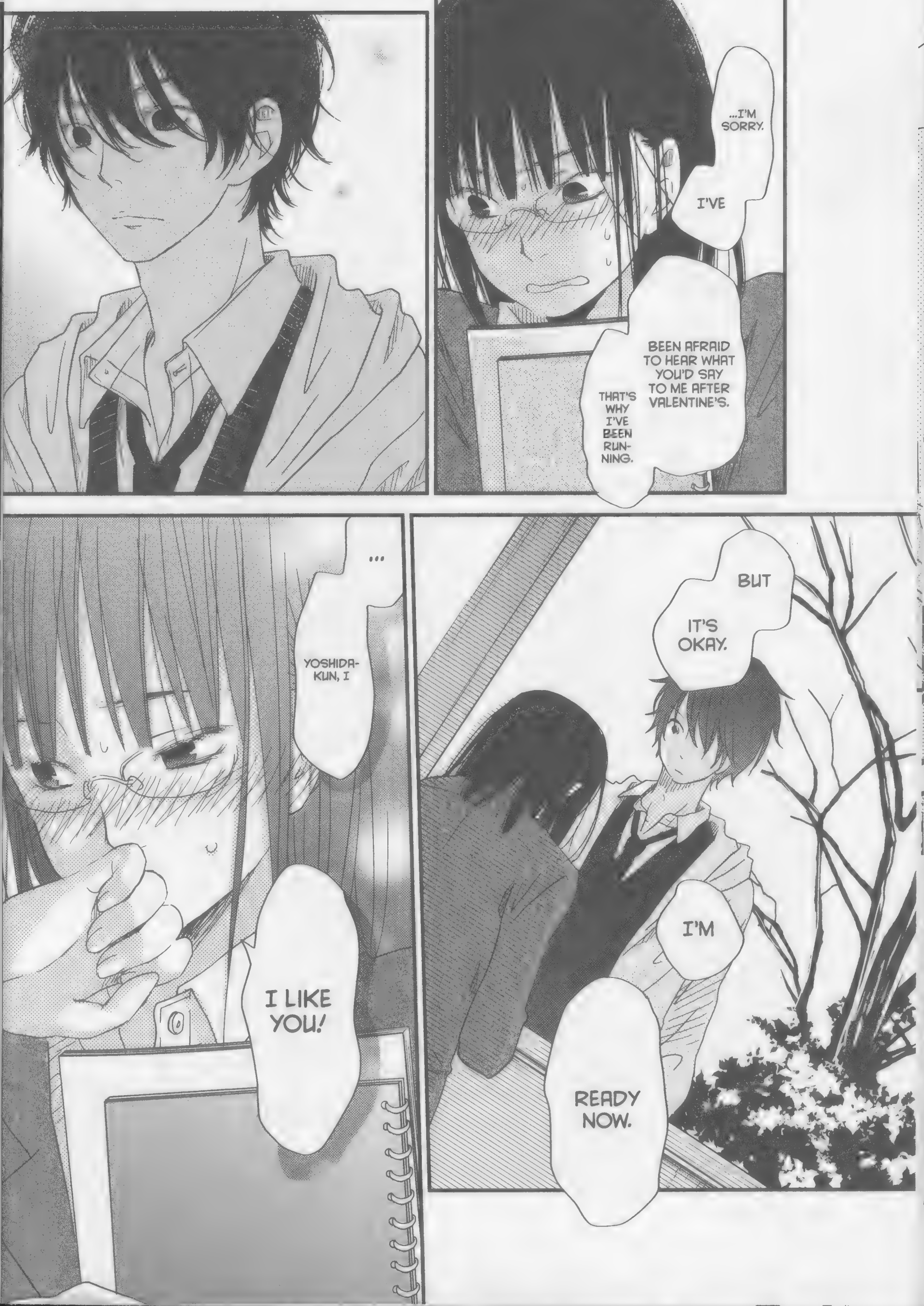

E...EFFORT.
...
THMP THMP THMP THMP
ドッドッ ドッドッ
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキドキ
SHH SHH SHH...
しんしんしん...
100 ORIGAMI PROJECTS
MAJOR BESTSELLER ENTER THE DEEP WORLD OF PAPER

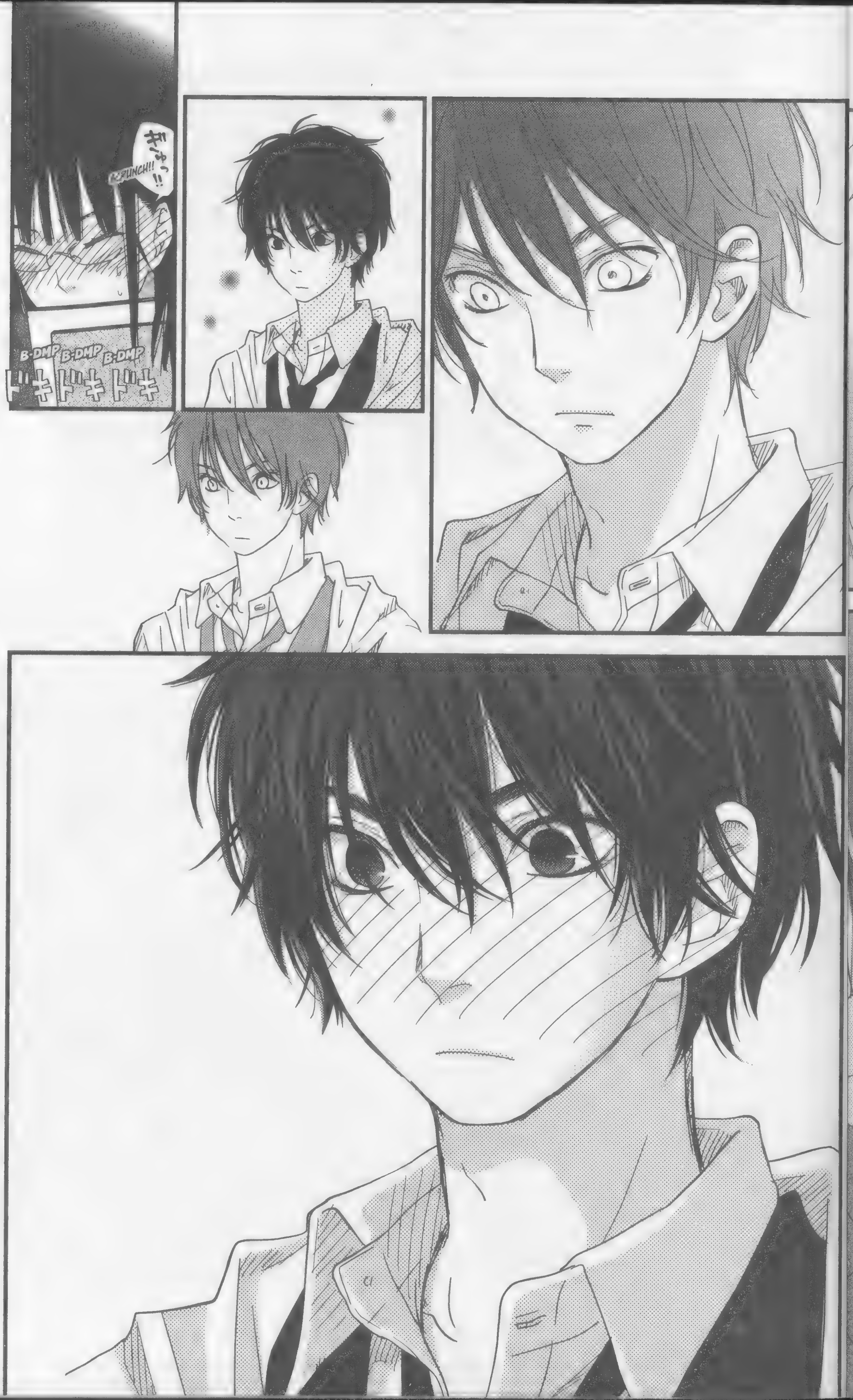

...
FINAL EXAM RESULTS
ザワ MURMUR
MURMUR ザワ
RANKINGS:
1. YOSHIDA, HARU
2. MIZUTANI, SHIZUKU
WHAT?! YOSHIDA-KUN GOT FIRST?!

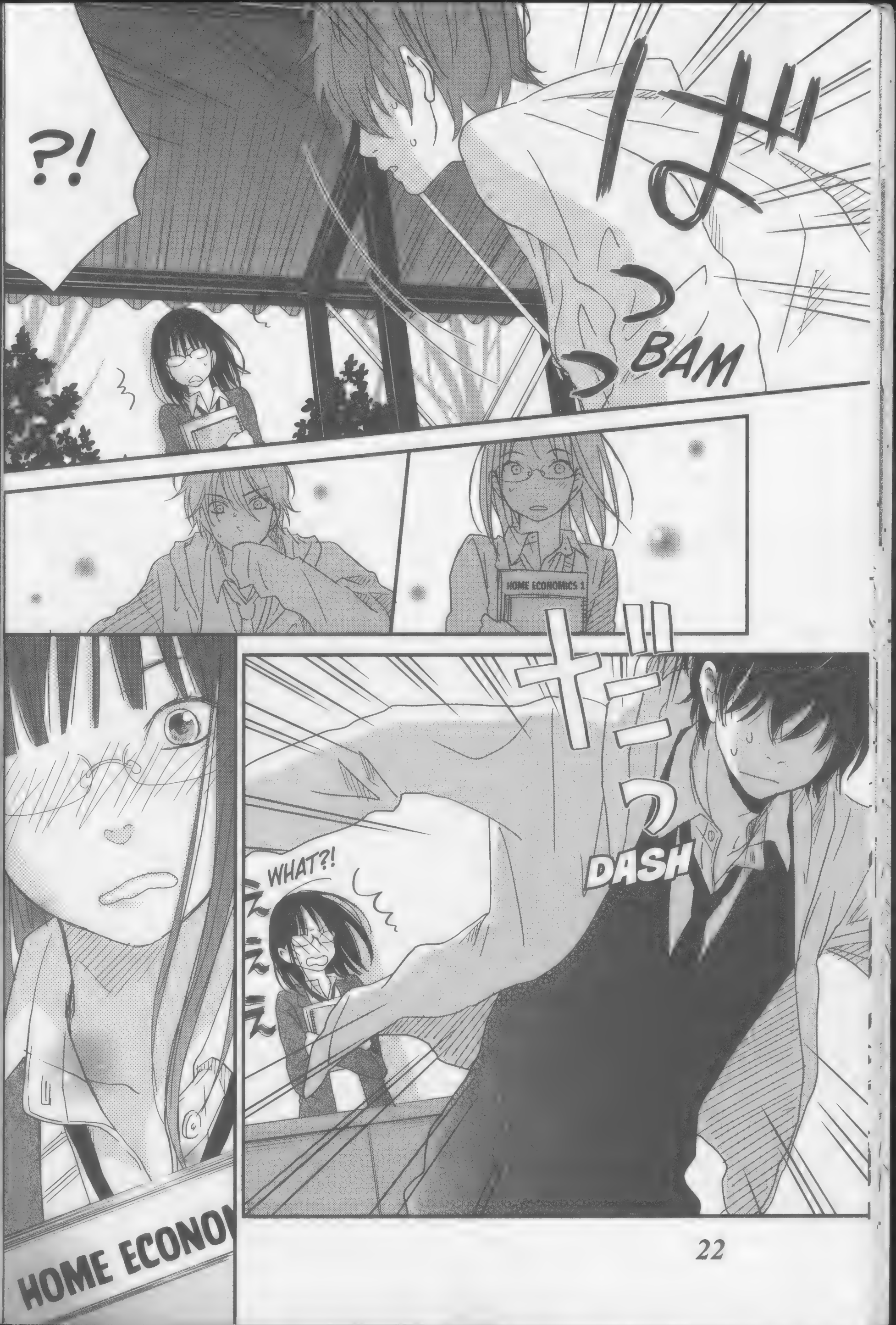

MURMUR ザワ
WHAT THE—WHAT HAPPENED?
YOSHIDA-KUN?! REALLY?!
HOW'D HE GET THAT SCORE?
DON'T BE STUPID, HE'S BEEN FIRST PRACTICALLY ALL YEAR.
YOU JUST DIDN'T KNOW.
MAN, THAT WAS CLOSE.
MURMUR ザワ
WHAT? YOU BEAT MIZUTANI-SAN?!
WAY TO GO, YOSHIDA-KUN!
BUT MIZUTANI-SAN STUDIES HERSELF TO DEATH. AND YOU BEAT HER? THAT'S INCREDIBLE!
R... REALLY?!
OH, IT'S NOTHING SPECIAL.
TEH HEH
TEH HEH
RIGHT, SHIZ...
GLARE!
?!
...THAT'S RIGHT.
IT'S ABSOLUTELY NO BIG DEAL WHATSOEVER.
TCH.
ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM!!
MURMUR ザワ
WHA—
WHAT THE?
MURMUR ザワ

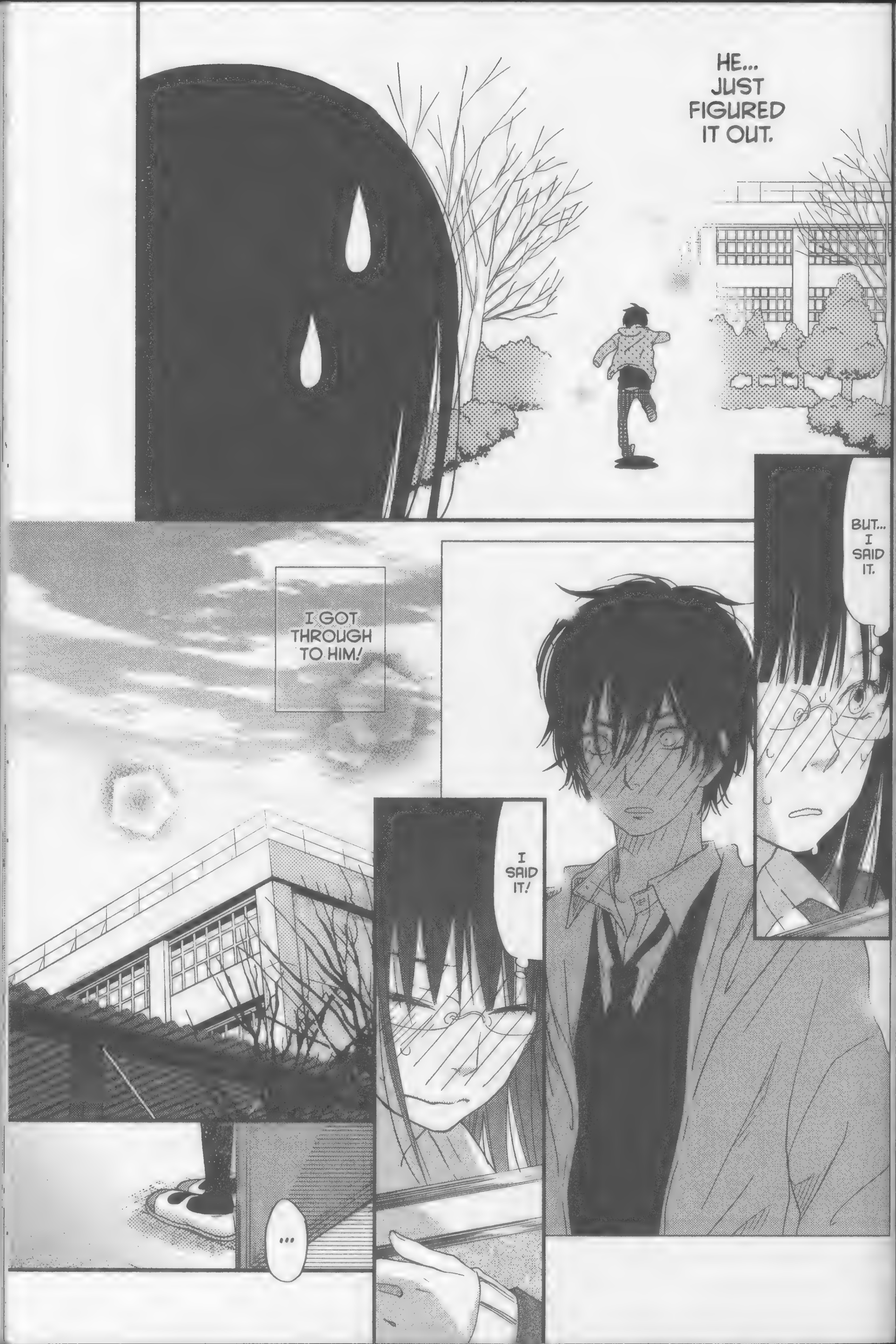

!
HEY, OSHIMA...
FSH
...
...
SIGH

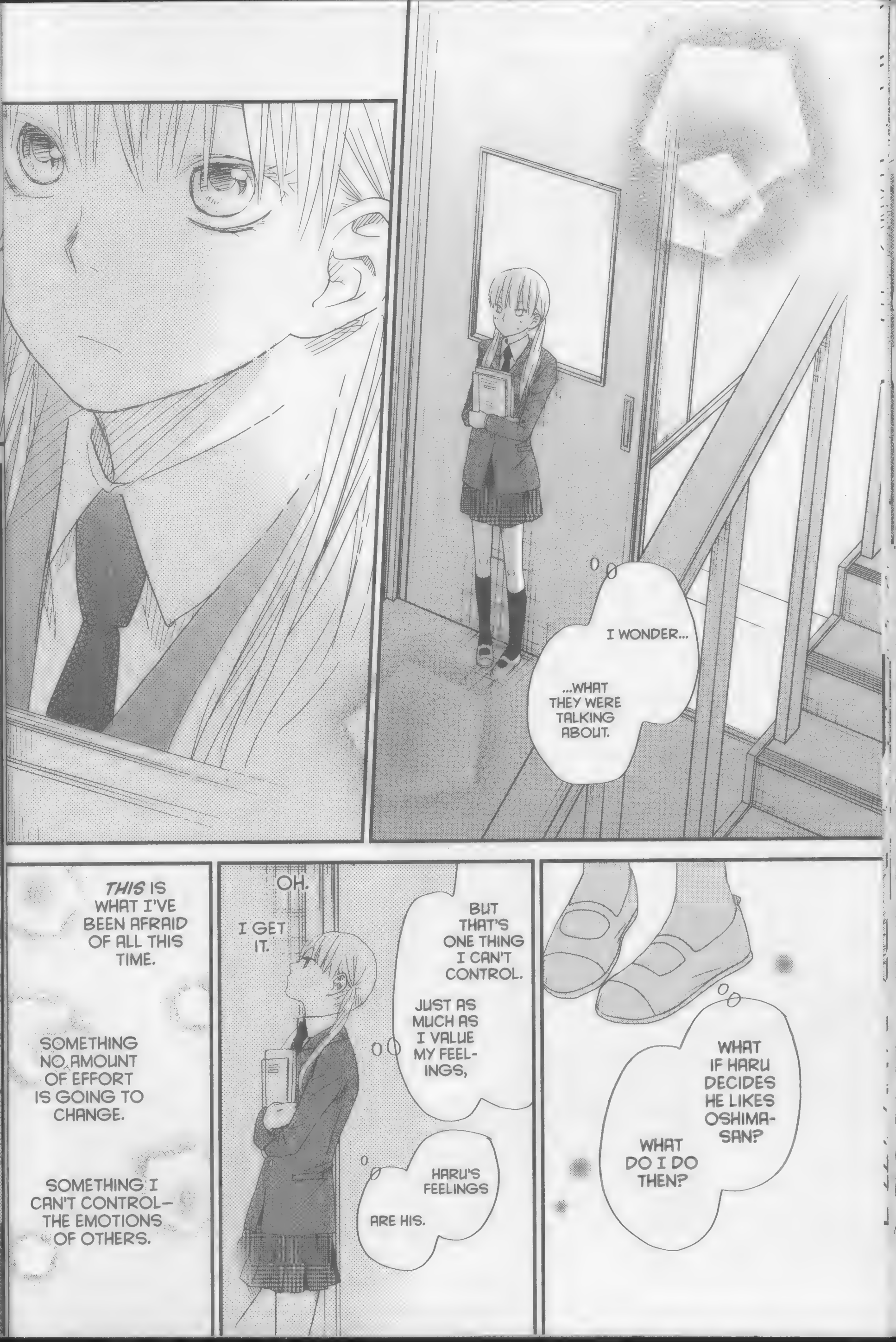

OSHIMA.
WINCE
EEP!
WH-WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOSHIDA-KUN?
YOU COULD HURT YOURSELF! GET DOWN FROM THERE!
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN FOREVER.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE. I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.
FLUTTER
BUT YOU'RE NEVER AROUND.
THEN WE FINALLY MADE EYE CONTACT, AND YOU RAN OFF.
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU WERE AVOIDING ME!
HAS VAST EXPERIENCE IN THAT ARENA
GULP
I-I'M SORRY!
OH!

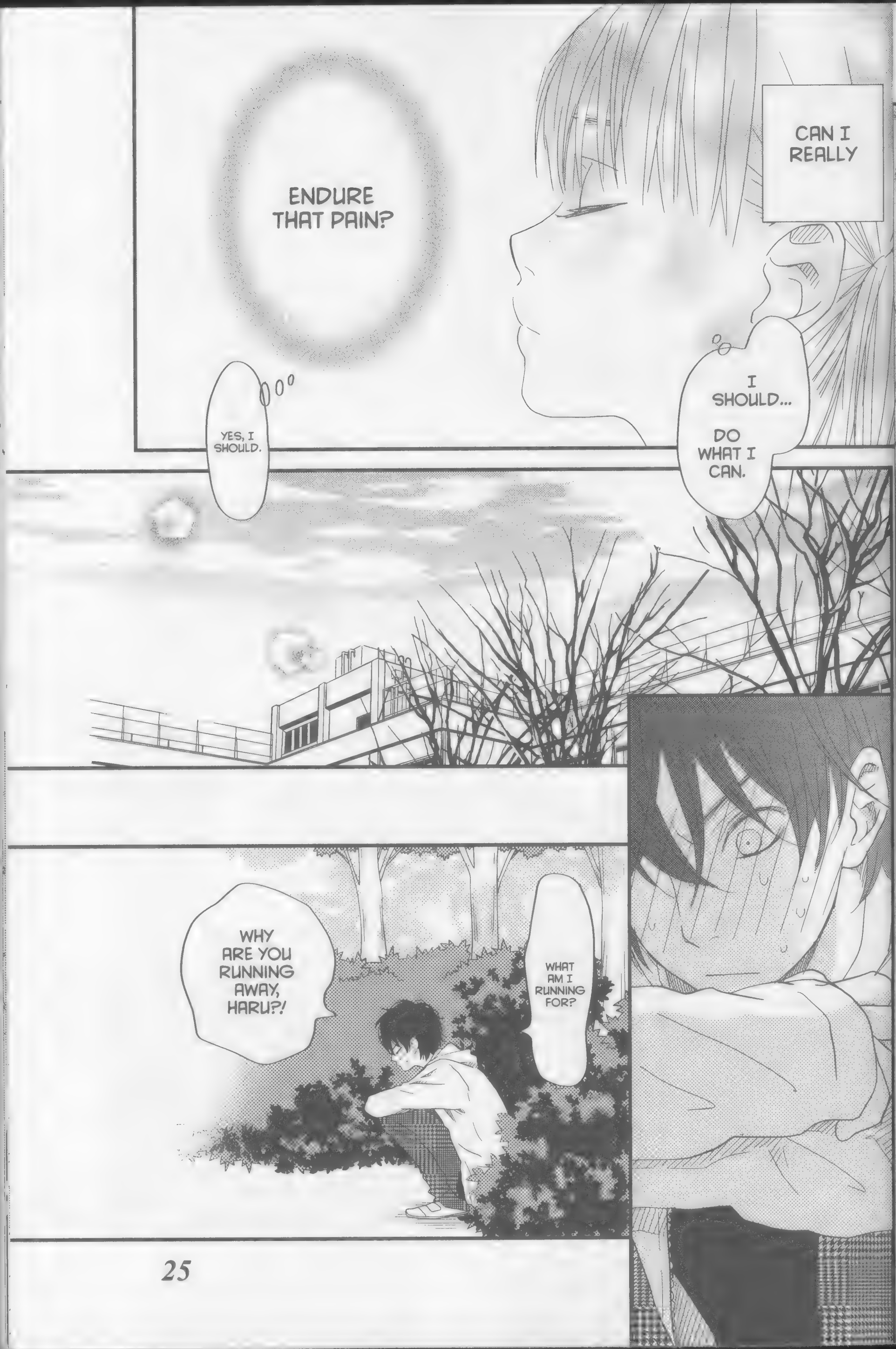

...I'M SORRY.
I'VE
BEEN AFRAID TO HEAR WHAT YOU'D SAY TO ME AFTER VALENTINE'S.
THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN RUNNING.
BUT
IT'S OKAY.
I'M
READY NOW.
...
YOSHIDA-KUN, I
I LIKE YOU!

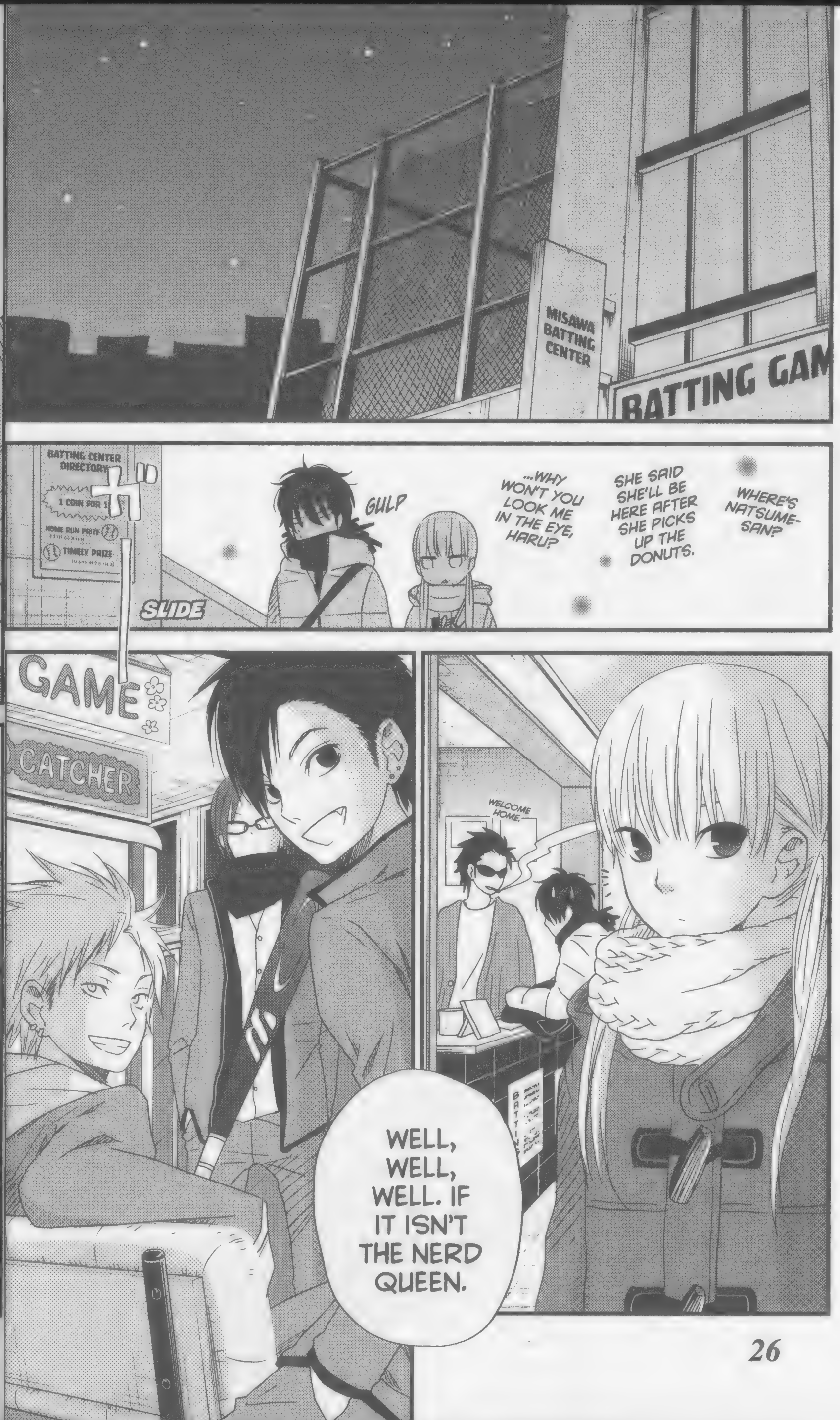

ぎゅっ!!
RUNCH!!
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキドキ

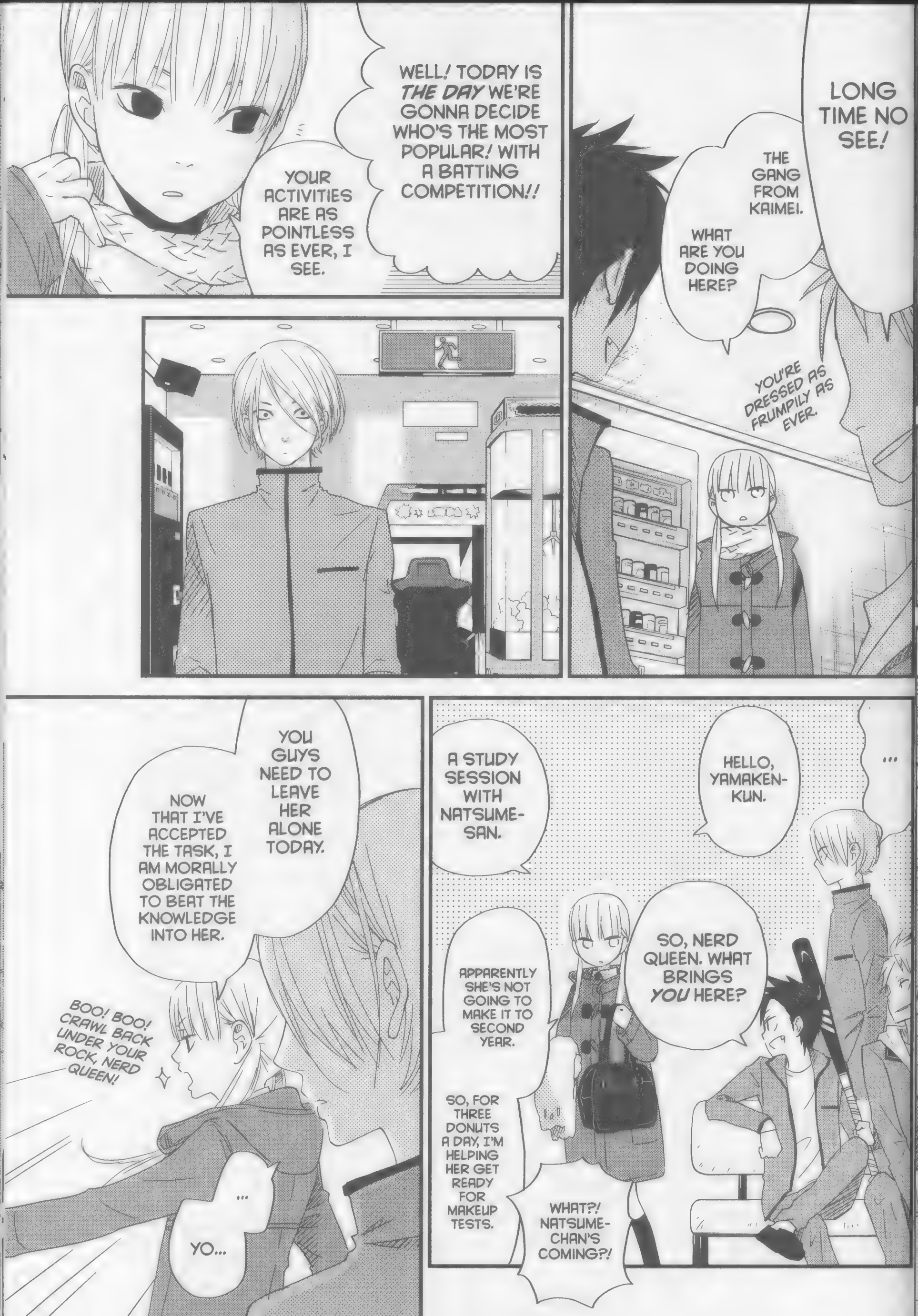

?!
ばっ
BAM
HOME ECONOMICS 1
ダッ
DASH
WHAT?!
えええ
HOME ECONO

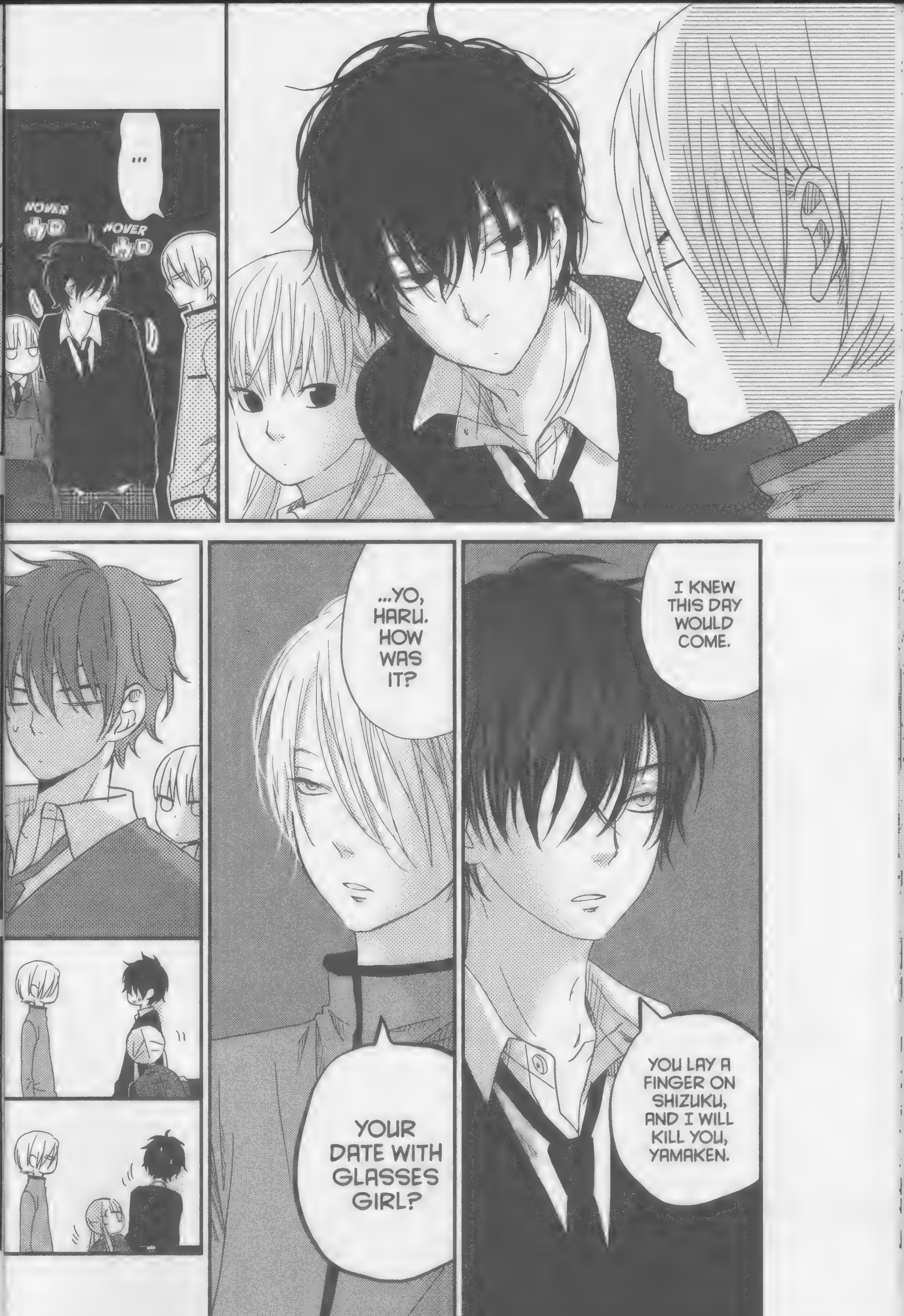

HE... JUST FIGURED IT OUT.
BUT... I SAID IT.
I SAID IT!
I GOT THROUGH TO HIM!
...

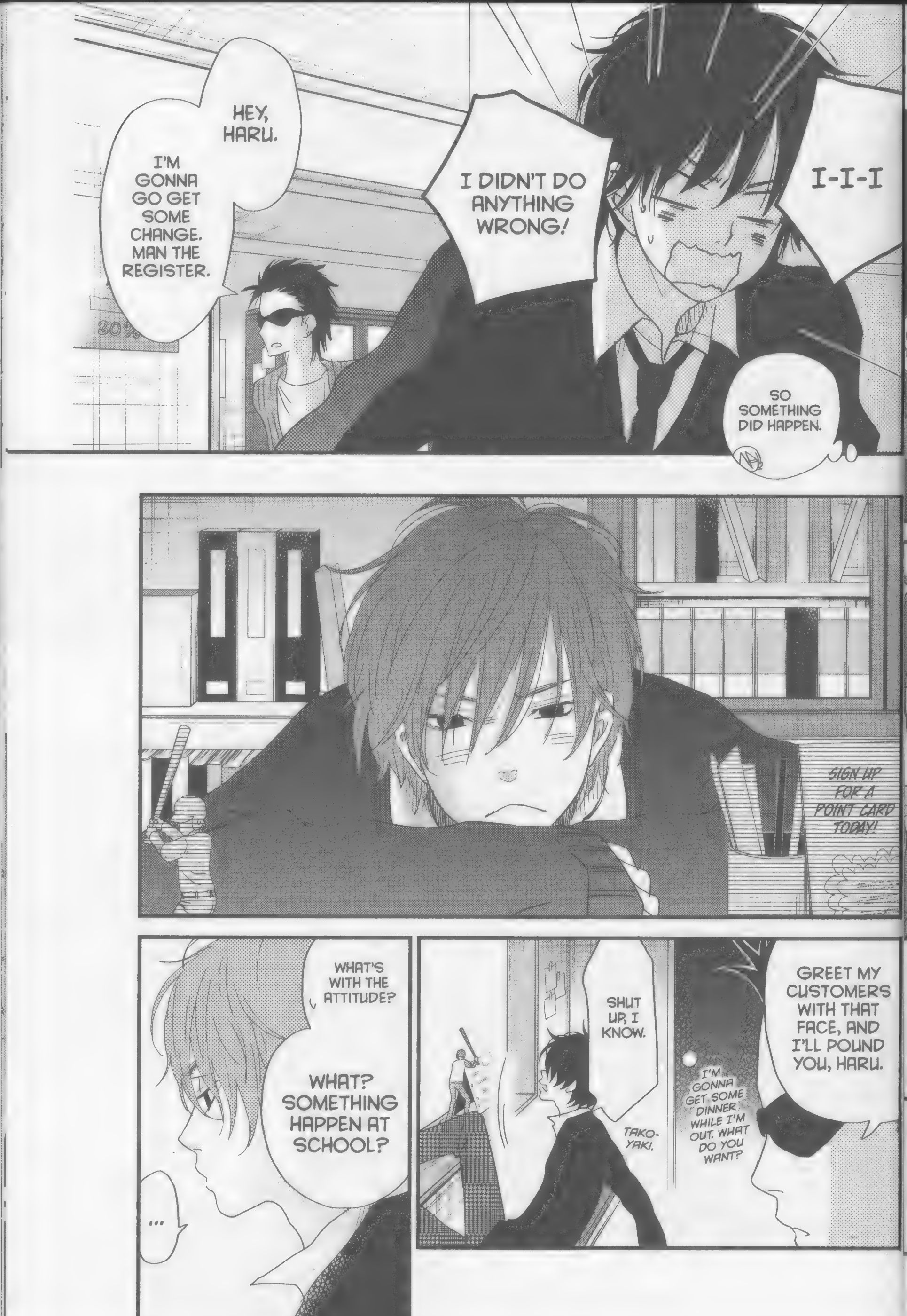

I WONDER...
...WHAT THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT.
WHAT IF HARU DECIDES HE LIKES OSHIMA-SAN?
WHAT DO I DO THEN?
BUT THAT'S ONE THING I CAN'T CONTROL.
JUST AS MUCH AS I VALUE MY FEELINGS,
HARU'S FEELINGS
ARE HIS.
OH.
I GET IT.
THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN AFRAID OF ALL THIS TIME.
SOMETHING NO AMOUNT OF EFFORT IS GOING TO CHANGE.
SOMETHING I CAN'T CONTROL— THE EMOTIONS OF OTHERS.

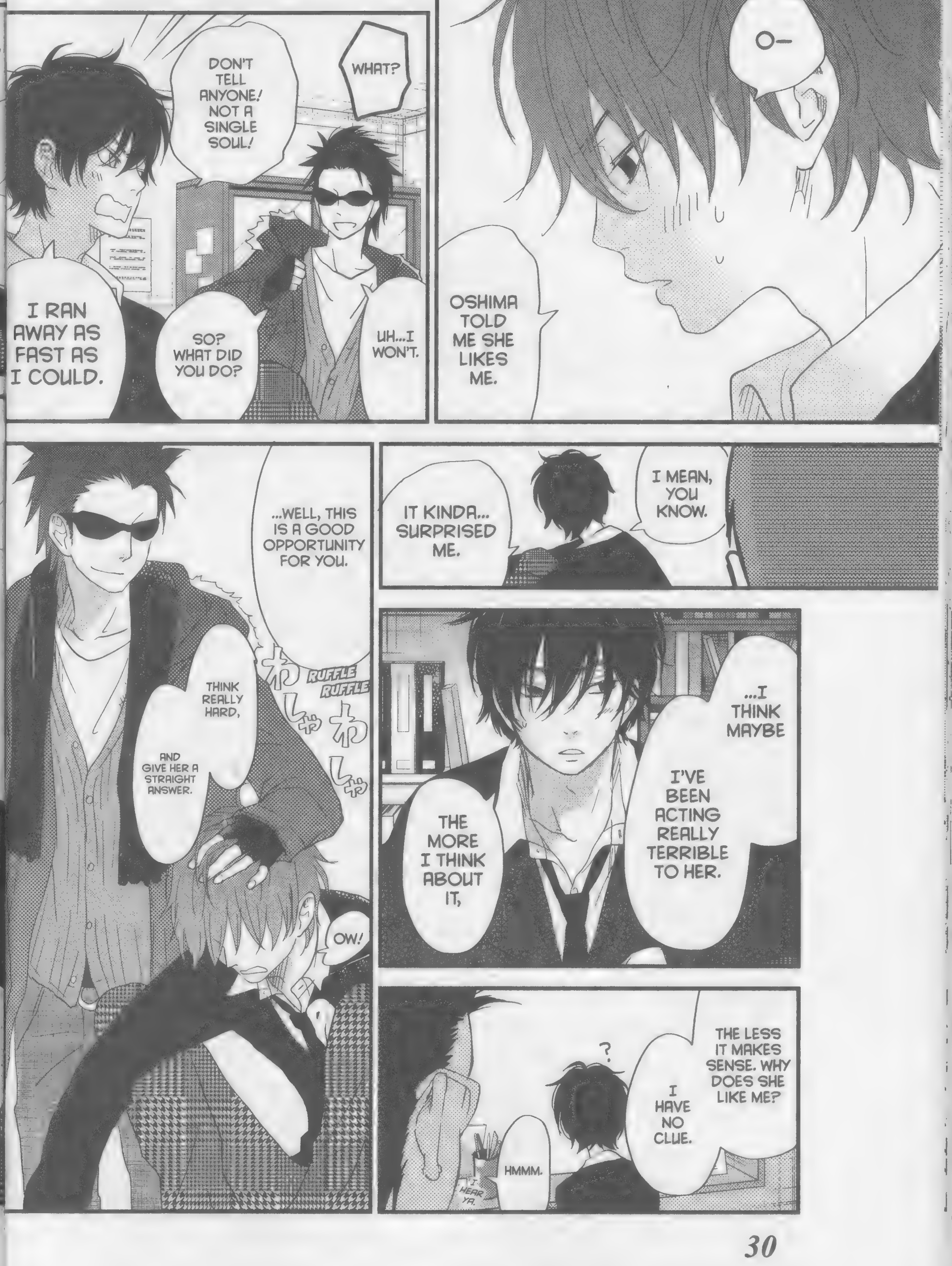

CAN I REALLY
ENDURE THAT PAIN?
I SHOULD...
DO WHAT I CAN.
YES, I SHOULD.
WHAT AM I RUNNING FOR?
WHY ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY, HARU?!

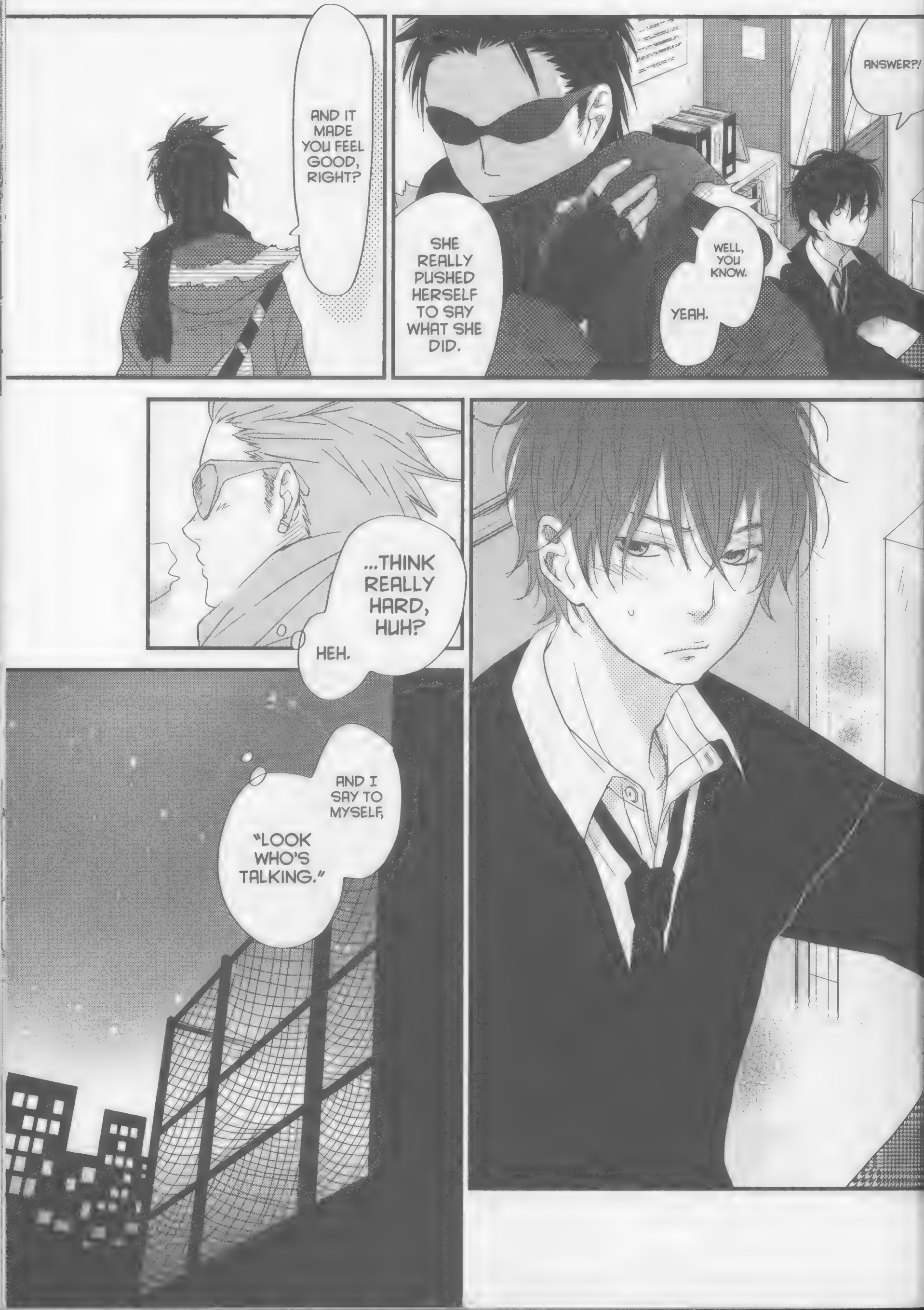

MISAWA BATTING CENTER
BATTING GAM
WHERE'S NATSUME-SAN?
SHE SAID SHE'LL BE HERE AFTER SHE PICKS UP THE DONUTS.
...WHY WON'T YOU LOOK ME IN THE EYE, HARU?
GULP
ガ
BATTING CENTER DIRECTORY
1 COIN FOR 1
HOME RUN PRIZE
TIMELY PRIZE
SLIDE
WELCOME HOME.
WELL, WELL, WELL. IF IT ISN'T THE NERD QUEEN.
GAME
CATCHER

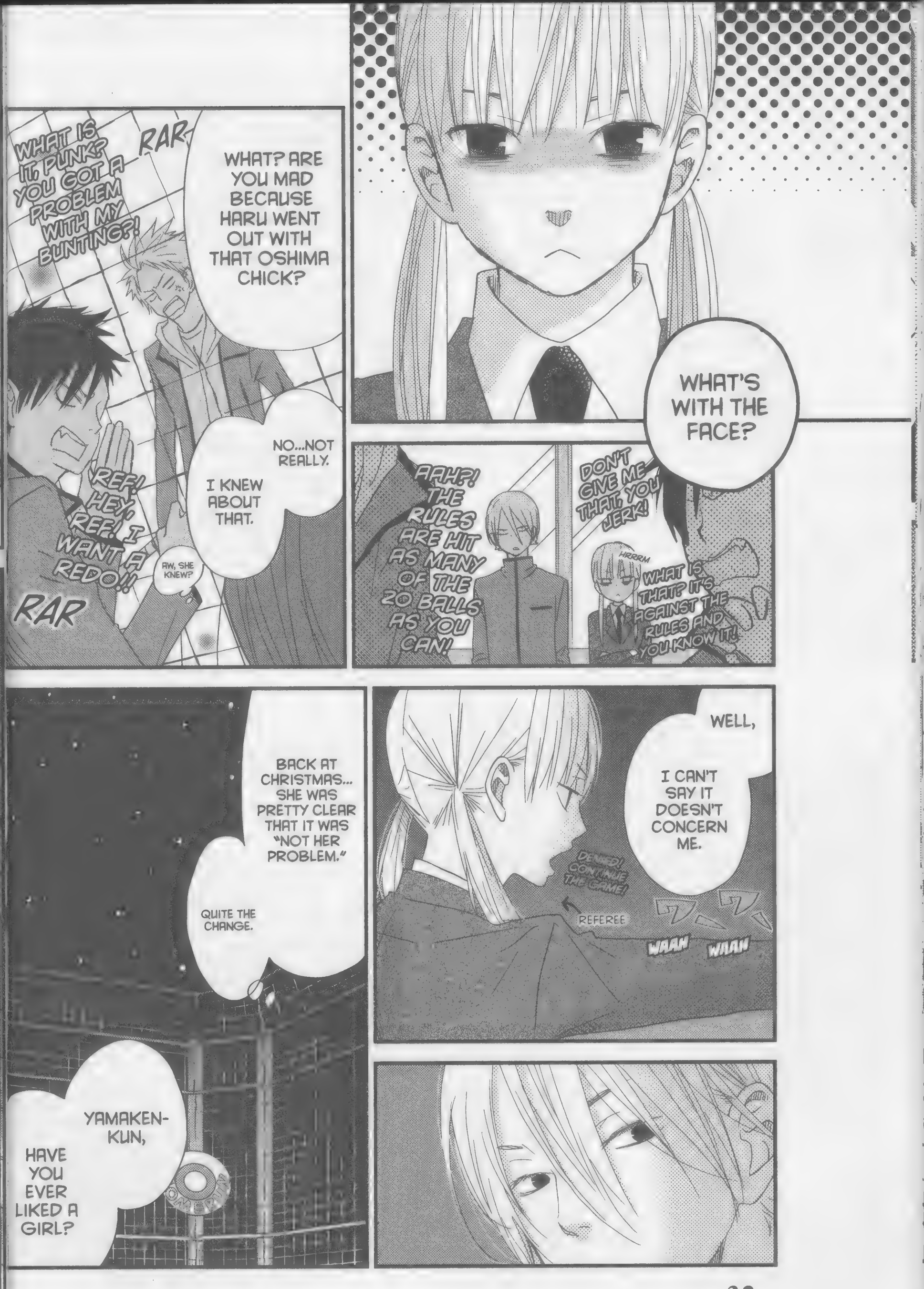

LONG TIME NO SEE!
THE GANG FROM KAIMEI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
YOU'RE DRESSED AS FRUMPILY AS EVER.
WELL! TODAY IS *THE DAY* WE'RE GONNA DECIDE WHO'S THE MOST POPULAR! WITH A BATTING COMPETITION!!
YOUR ACTIVITIES ARE AS POINTLESS AS EVER, I SEE.
...
HELLO, YAMAKEN-KUN.
A STUDY SESSION WITH NATSUME-SAN.
SO, NERD QUEEN. WHAT BRINGS *YOU* HERE?
APPARENTLY SHE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT TO SECOND YEAR.
SO, FOR THREE DONUTS A DAY, I'M HELPING HER GET READY FOR MAKEUP TESTS.
WHAT?! NATSUME-CHAN'S COMING?!
YOU GUYS NEED TO LEAVE HER ALONE TODAY.
NOW THAT I'VE ACCEPTED THE TASK, I AM MORALLY OBLIGATED TO BEAT THE KNOWLEDGE INTO HER.
BOO! BOO! CRAWL BACK UNDER YOUR ROCK, NERD QUEEN!
...
YO...

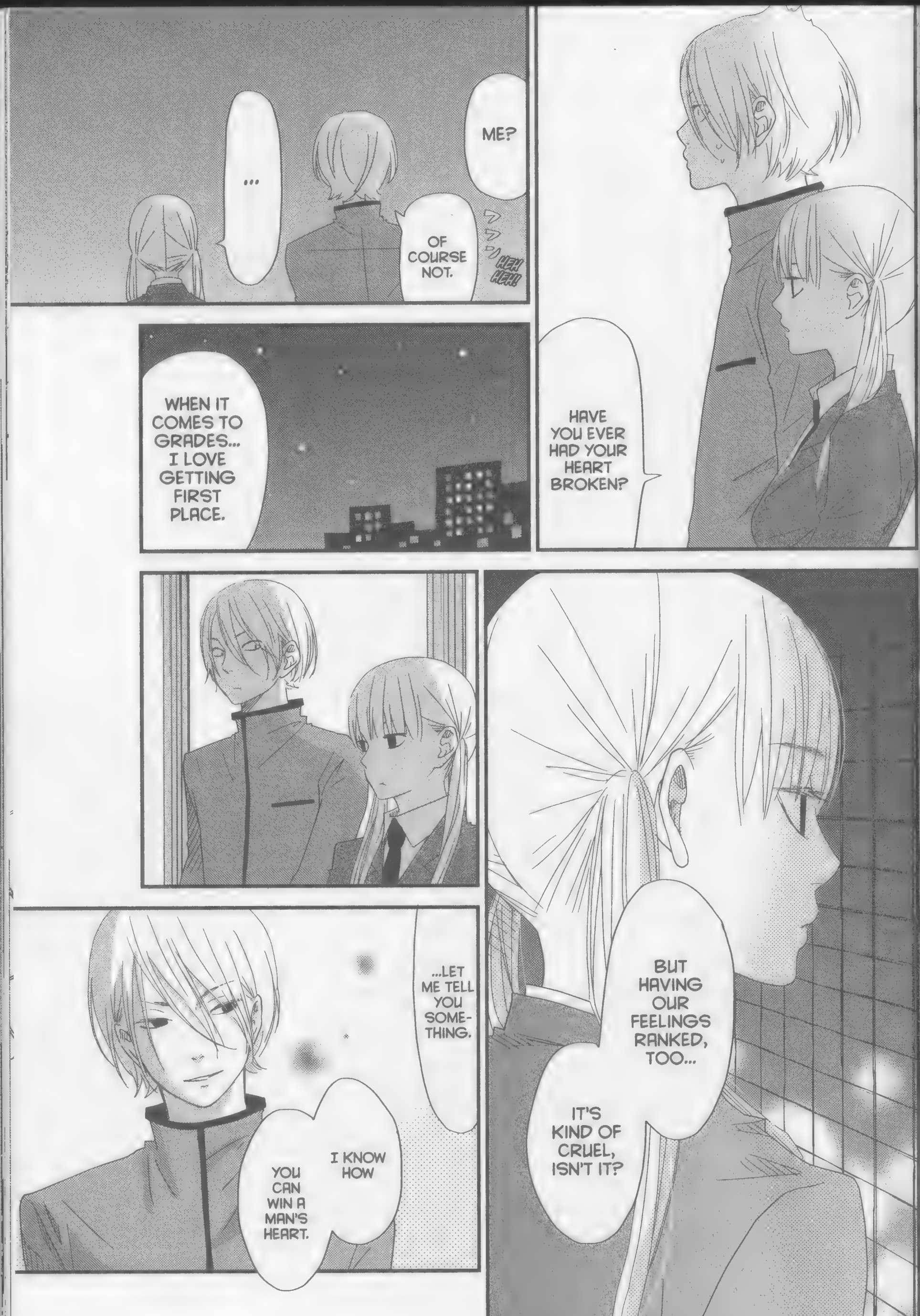

...
HOVER
HOVER
I KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME.
YOU LAY A FINGER ON SHIZUKU, AND I WILL KILL YOU, YAMAKEN.
...YO, HARU. HOW WAS IT?
YOUR DATE WITH GLASSES GIRL?

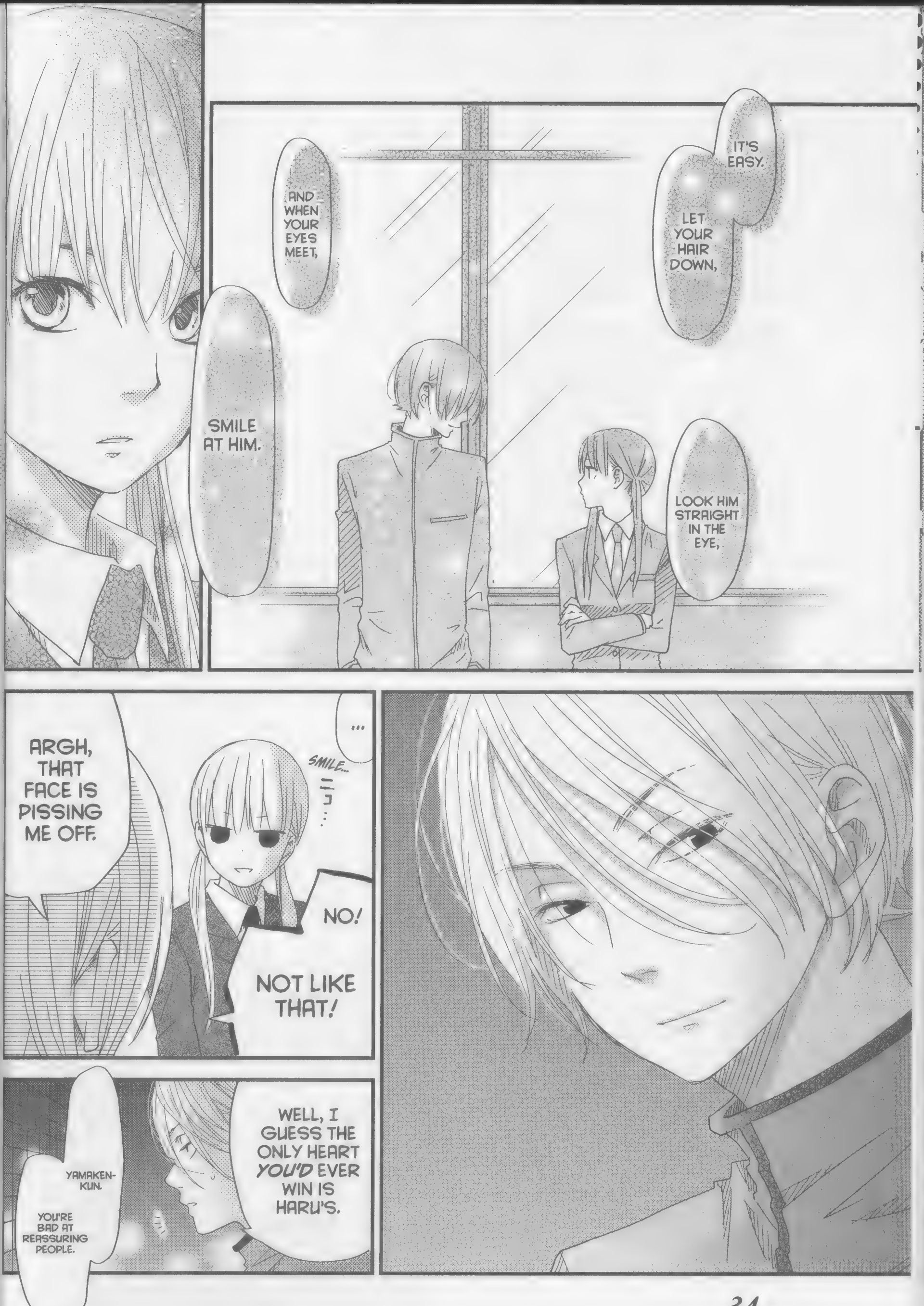

I-I-I
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!
SO SOMETHING DID HAPPEN.
HEY, HARU.
I'M GONNA GO GET SOME CHANGE. MAN THE REGISTER.
30%
SIGN UP FOR A POINT CARD TODAY!
GREET MY CUSTOMERS WITH THAT FACE, AND I'LL POUND YOU, HARU.
I'M GONNA GET SOME DINNER WHILE I'M OUT. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
TAKO-YAKI.
SHUT UP, I KNOW.
WHAT'S WITH THE ATTITUDE?
WHAT? SOMETHING HAPPEN AT SCHOOL?
...

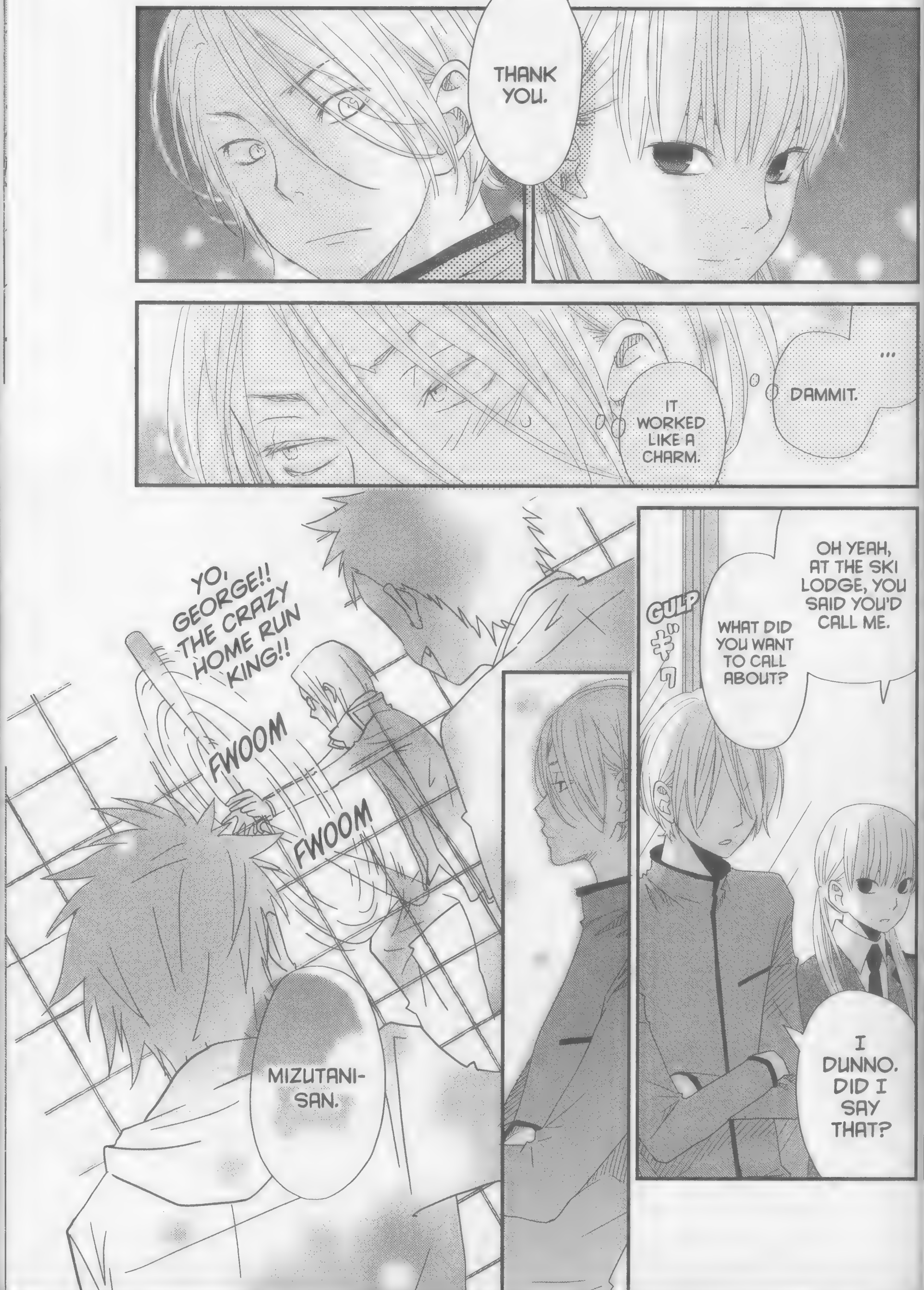

O—
OSHIMA TOLD ME SHE LIKES ME.
WHAT?
DON'T TELL ANYONE! NOT A SINGLE SOUL!
UH...I WON'T.
SO? WHAT DID YOU DO?
I RAN AWAY AS FAST AS I COULD.
I MEAN, YOU KNOW.
IT KINDA... SURPRISED ME.
...I THINK MAYBE
I'VE BEEN ACTING REALLY TERRIBLE TO HER.
THE MORE I THINK ABOUT IT,
THE LESS IT MAKES SENSE. WHY DOES SHE LIKE ME?
?
I HAVE NO CLUE.
HMMM.
I HEAR YA.
...WELL, THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU.
RUFFLE RUFFLE
わしゃわしゃ
THINK REALLY HARD,
AND GIVE HER A STRAIGHT ANSWER.
OW!

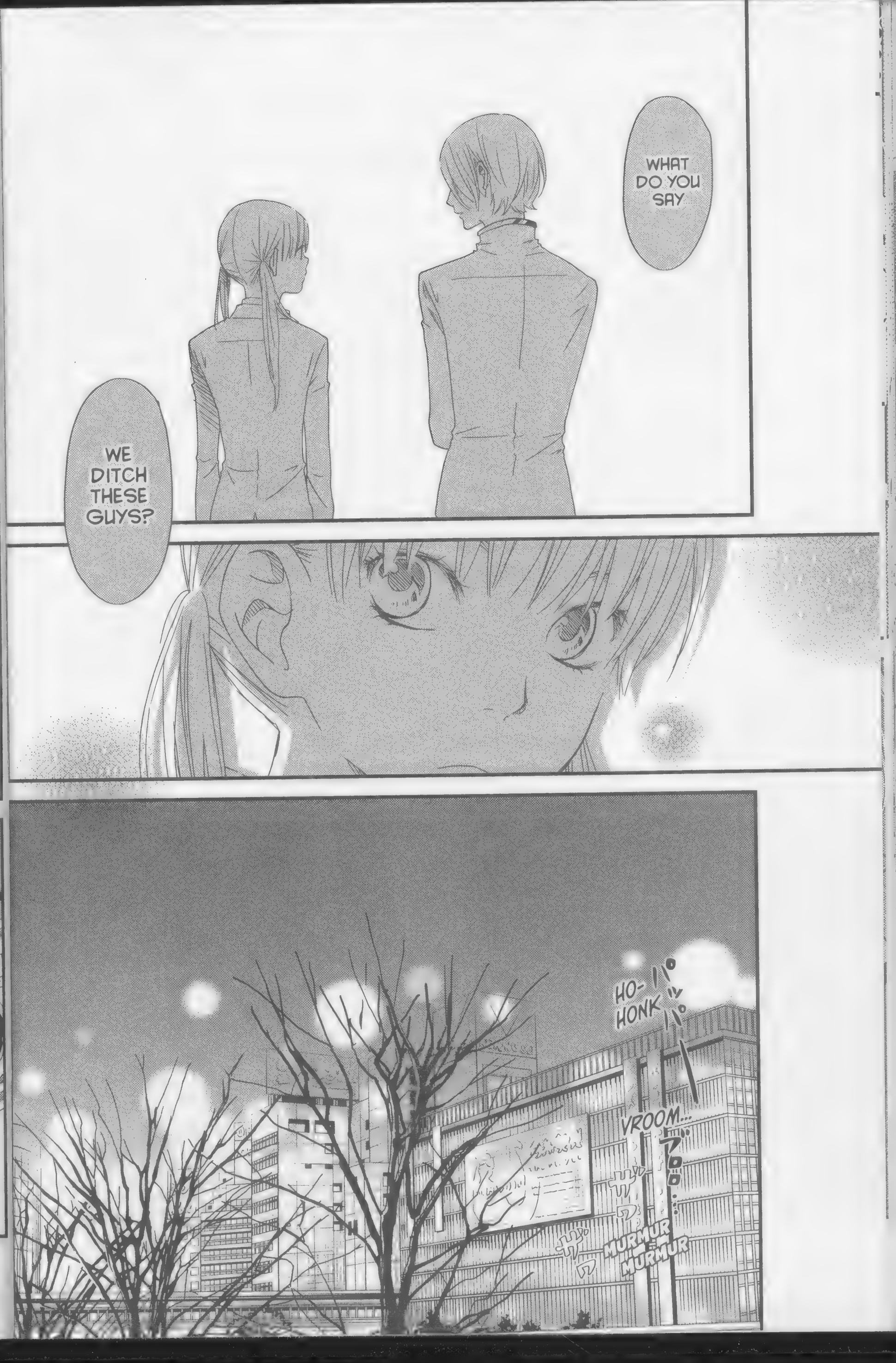

ANSWER?!
WELL, YOU KNOW.
YEAH.
SHE REALLY PUSHED HERSELF TO SAY WHAT SHE DID.
AND IT MADE YOU FEEL GOOD, RIGHT?
...THINK REALLY HARD, HUH?
HEH.
AND I SAY TO MYSELF,
"LOOK WHO'S TALKING."

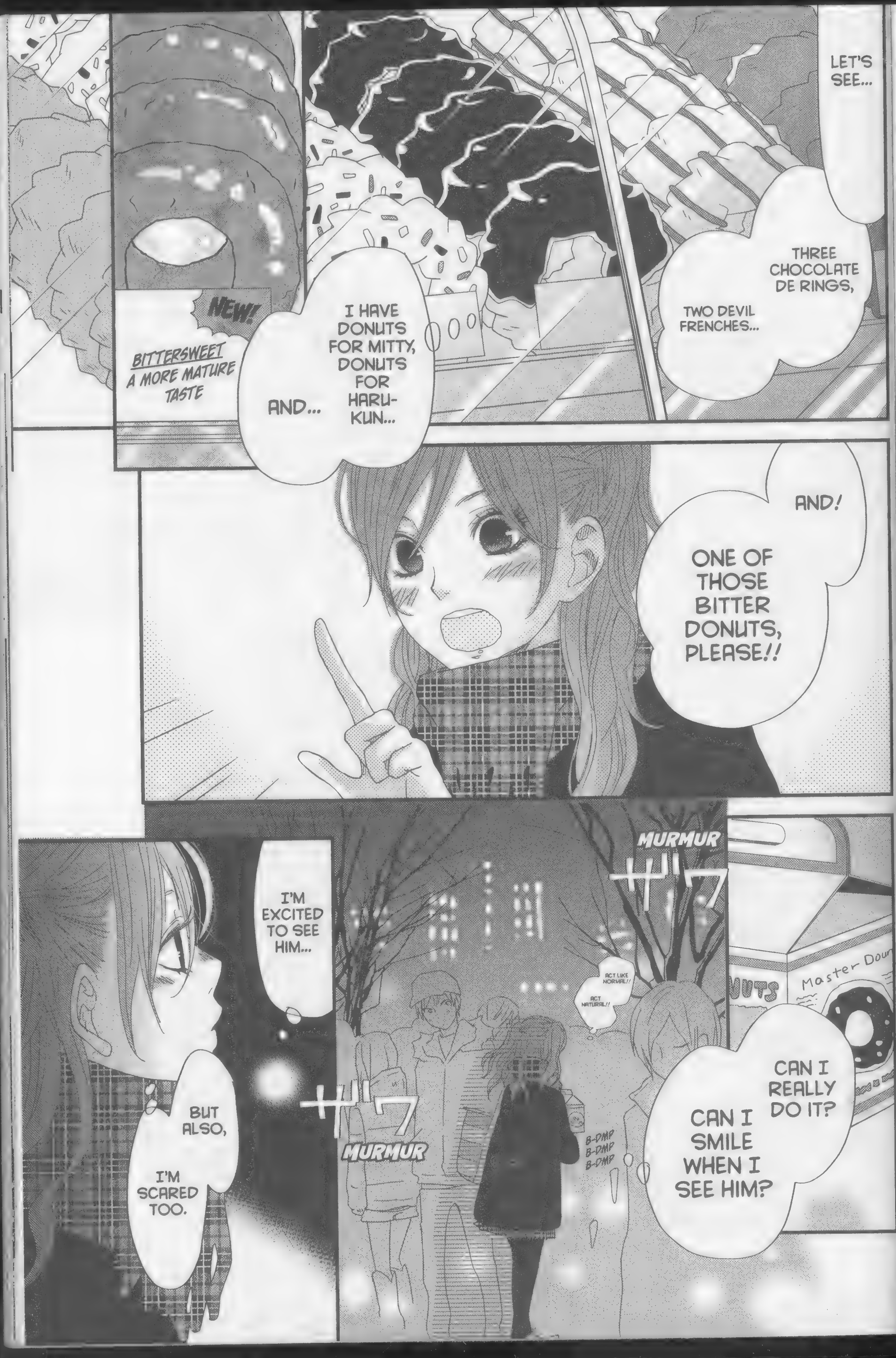

WHAT'S WITH THE FACE?
WHAT? ARE YOU MAD BECAUSE HARU WENT OUT WITH THAT OSHIMA CHICK?
RAR
WHAT IS IT, PUNK? YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH MY BUNTING?!
NO...NOT REALLY.
I KNEW ABOUT THAT.
AW, SHE KNEW?
REF! HEY, REF! I WANT A REDO!!
RAR
DON'T GIVE ME THAT, YOU JERK!
HRRRM
WHAT IS THAT? IT'S AGAINST THE RULES AND YOU KNOW IT!
AAH?! THE RULES ARE HIT AS MANY OF THE 20 BALLS AS YOU CAN!
WELL,
I CAN'T SAY IT DOESN'T CONCERN ME.
DENIED! CONTINUE THE GAME!
REFEREE
WAAH
WAAH
BACK AT CHRISTMAS... SHE WAS PRETTY CLEAR THAT IT WAS "NOT HER PROBLEM."
QUITE THE CHANGE.
YAMAKEN-KUN,
HAVE YOU EVER LIKED A GIRL?

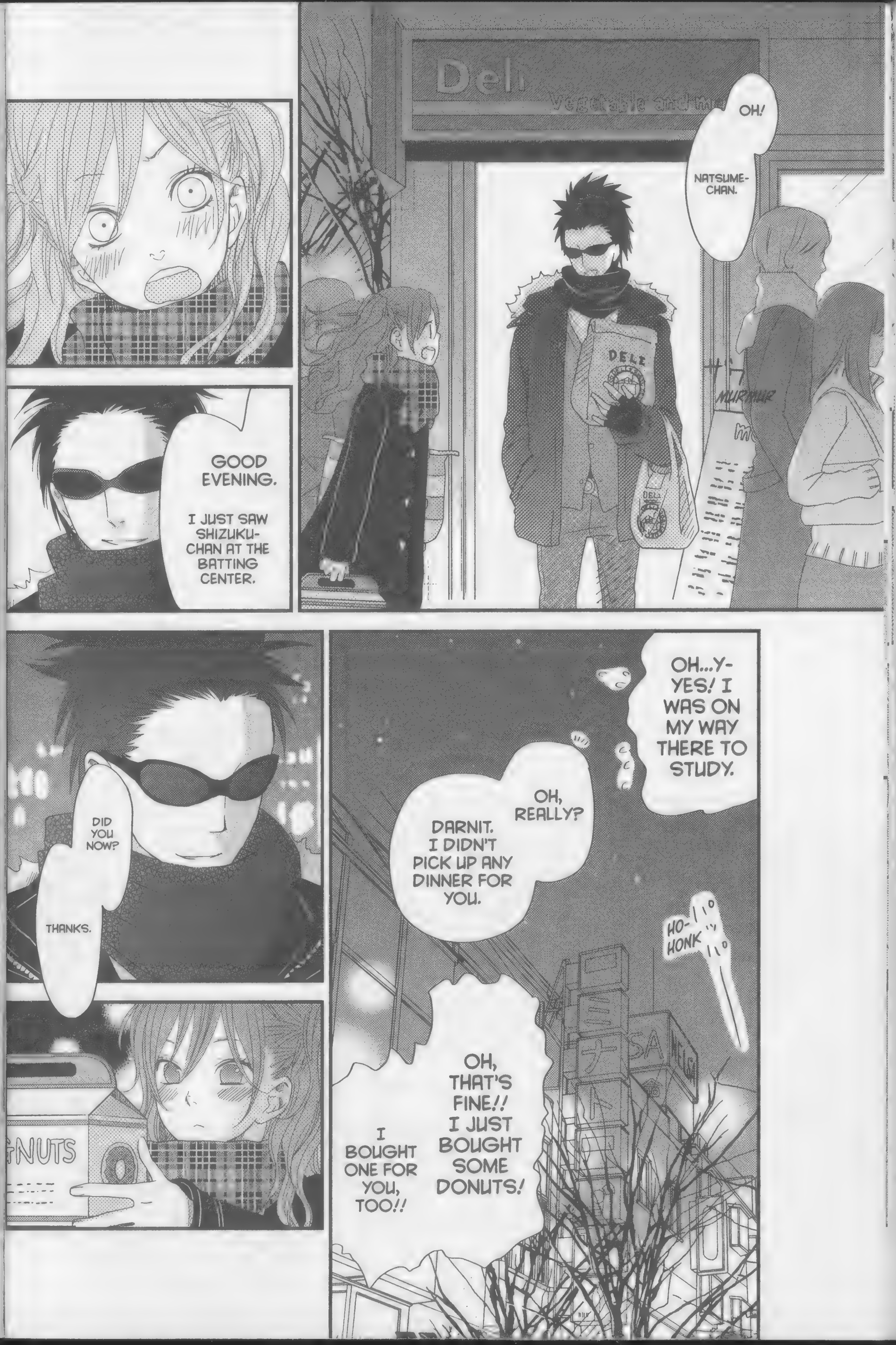

HAVE YOU EVER HAD YOUR HEART BROKEN?
ME?
OF COURSE NOT.
HEH HEH!
...
WHEN IT COMES TO GRADES... I LOVE GETTING FIRST PLACE.
BUT HAVING OUR FEELINGS RANKED, TOO...
IT'S KIND OF CRUEL, ISN'T IT?
...LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING.
I KNOW HOW
YOU CAN WIN A MAN'S HEART.

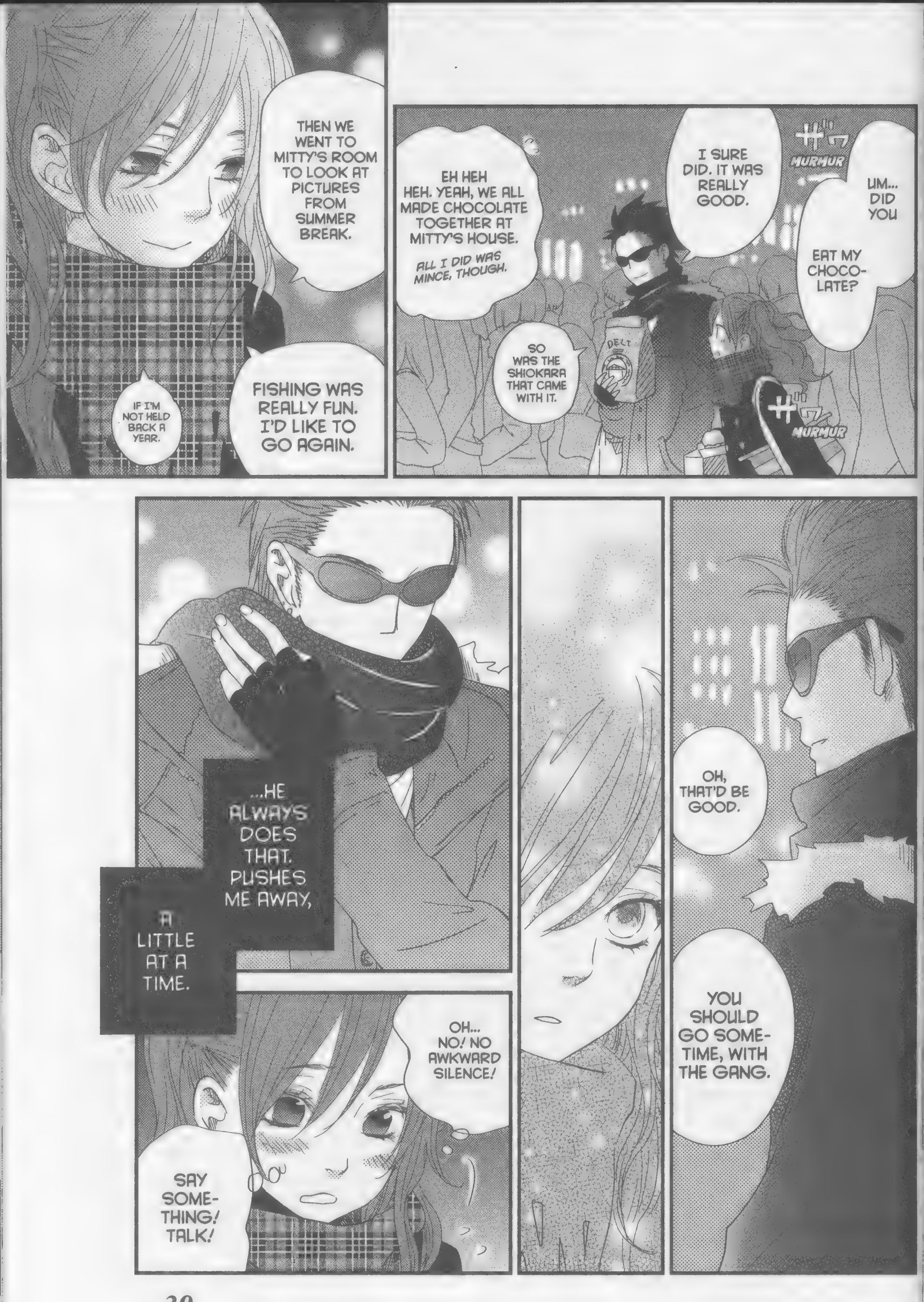

IT'S EASY.
LET YOUR HAIR DOWN,
LOOK HIM STRAIGHT IN THE EYE,
AND WHEN YOUR EYES MEET,
SMILE AT HIM.
...
SMILE... ニコ
ARGH, THAT FACE IS PISSING ME OFF.
NO!
NOT LIKE THAT!
WELL, I GUESS THE ONLY HEART *YOU'D* EVER WIN IS HARU'S.
YAMAKEN-KUN.
YOU'RE BAD AT REASSURING PEOPLE.

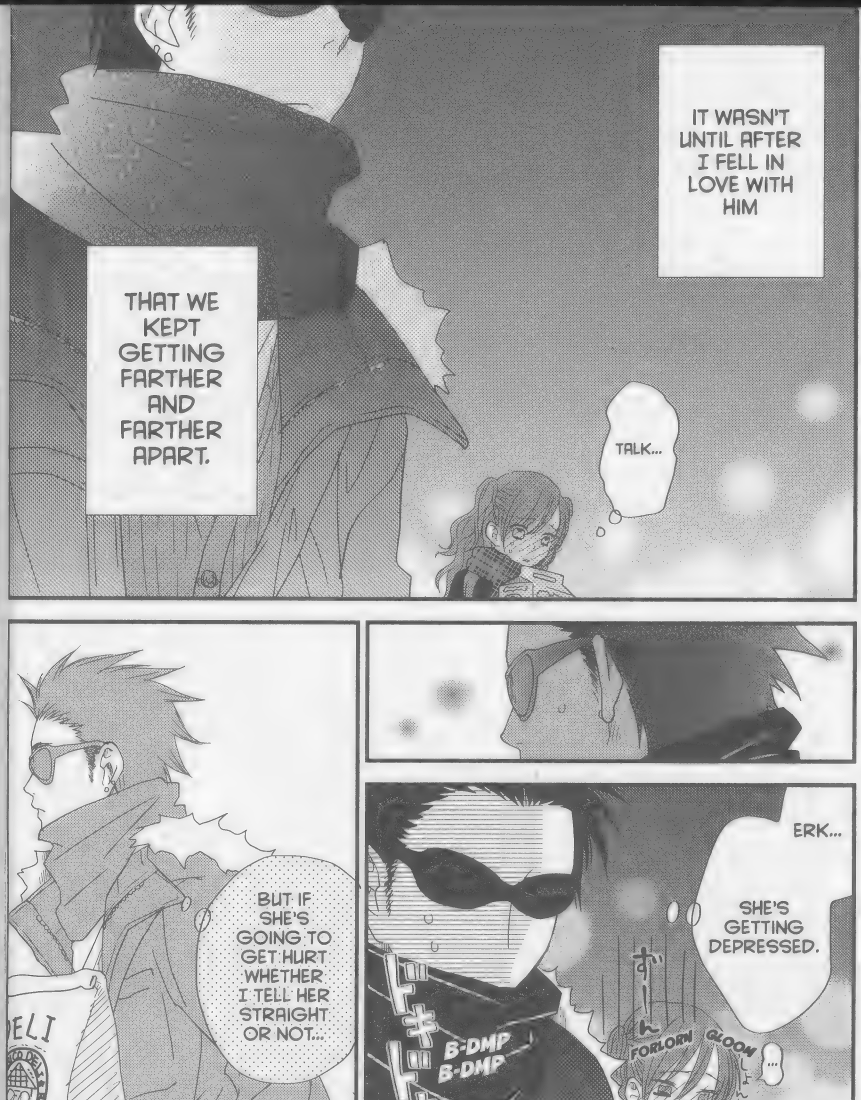

THANK YOU.
...
DAMMIT.
IT WORKED LIKE A CHARM.
OH YEAH, AT THE SKI LODGE, YOU SAID YOU'D CALL ME.
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO CALL ABOUT?
GULP ギク
I DUNNO. DID I SAY THAT?
YO, GEORGE!! THE CRAZY HOME RUN KING!!
FWOOM
FWOOM
MIZUTANI-SAN.

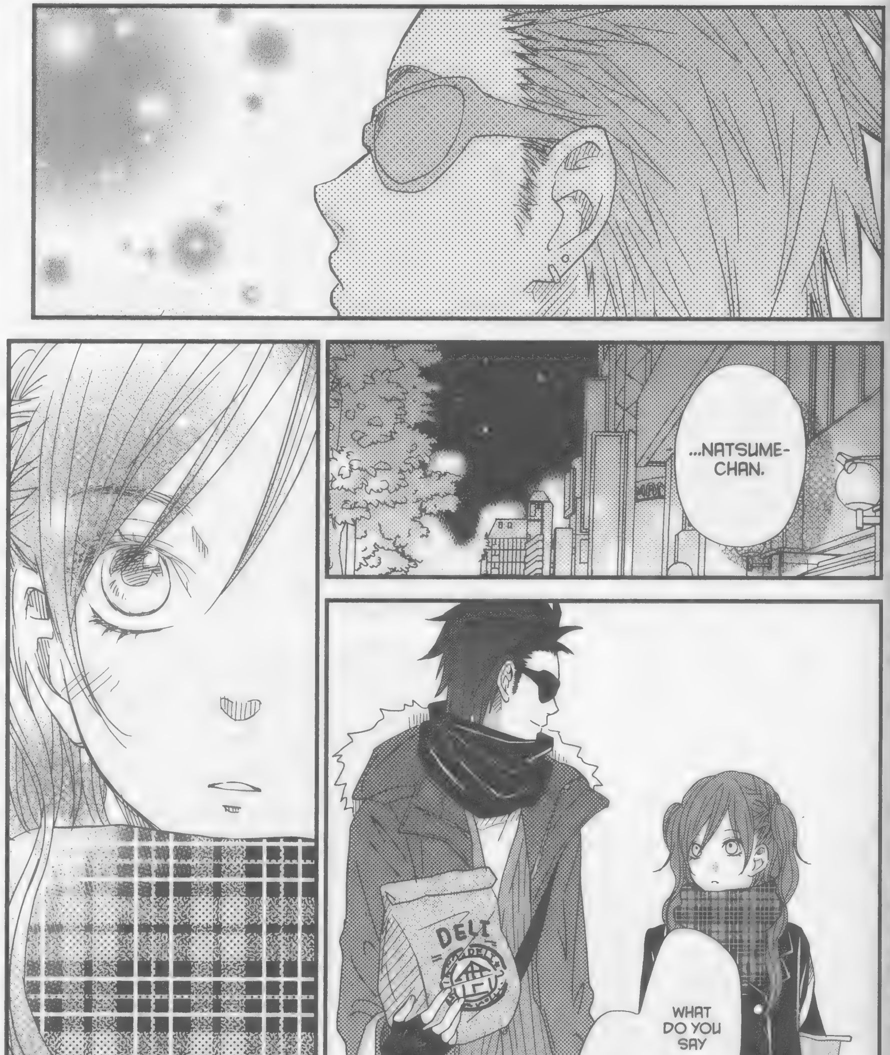

WHAT DO YOU SAY
WE DITCH THESE GUYS?
HO-HONK
パッパー
VROOM...
ブロロ...
MURMUR MURMUR
ザワザワ

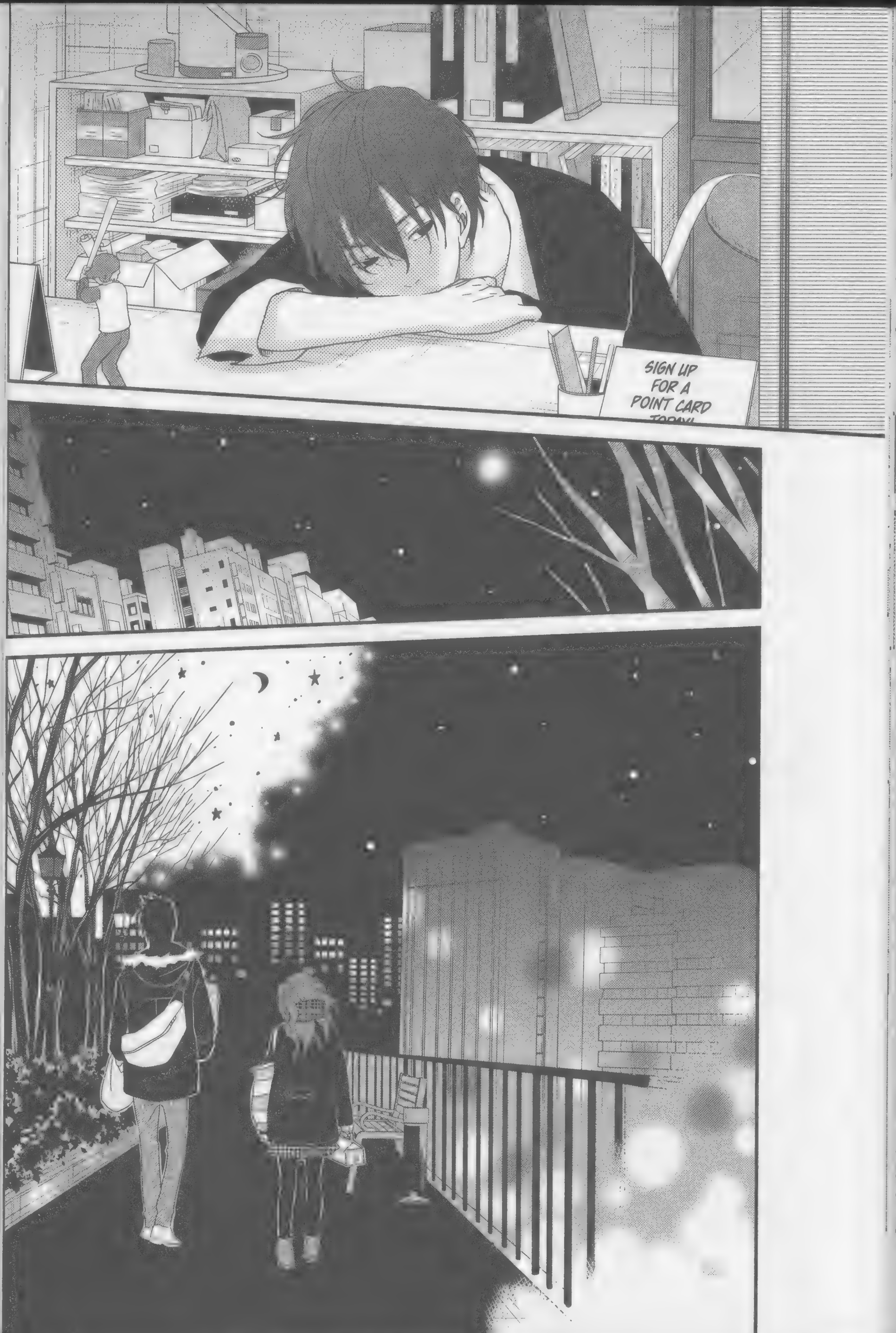

LET'S SEE...
THREE CHOCOLATE DE RINGS,
TWO DEVIL FRENCHES...
I HAVE DONUTS FOR MITTY, DONUTS FOR HARU-KUN...
AND...
NEW!
BITTERSWEET A MORE MATURE TASTE
AND!
ONE OF THOSE BITTER DONUTS, PLEASE!!
MURMUR
ザワ
Master Donuts
ACT LIKE NORMAL!!
ACT NATURAL!!
CAN I REALLY DO IT?
CAN I SMILE WHEN I SEE HIM?
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
I'M EXCITED TO SEE HIM...
MURMUR
ザワ
BUT ALSO, I'M SCARED TOO.


OH!
NATSUME-CHAN.
ザワ MURMUR
DELI
GOOD EVENING.
I JUST SAW SHIZUKU-CHAN AT THE BATTING CENTER.
OH...Y-YES! I WAS ON MY WAY THERE TO STUDY.
OH, REALLY?
DARNIT. I DIDN'T PICK UP ANY DINNER FOR YOU.
HO-HONK
OH, THAT'S FINE!! I JUST BOUGHT SOME DONUTS!
I BOUGHT ONE FOR YOU, TOO!!
DID YOU NOW?
THANKS.
NUTS

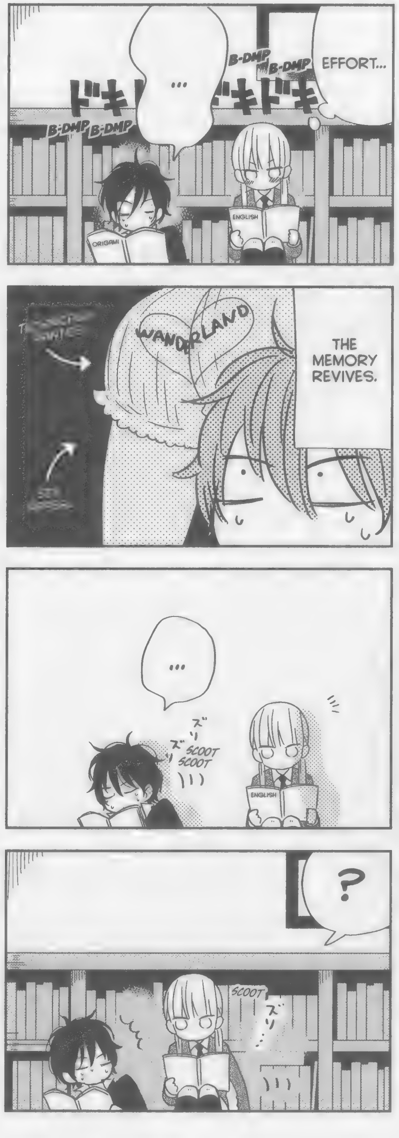

UM... DID YOU EAT MY CHOCOLATE?
ザワ MURMUR
I SURE DID. IT WAS REALLY GOOD.
EH HEH HEH. YEAH, WE ALL MADE CHOCOLATE TOGETHER AT MITTY'S HOUSE.
ALL I DID WAS MINCE, THOUGH.
SO WAS THE SHIOKARA THAT CAME WITH IT.
ザワ MURMUR
THEN WE WENT TO MITTY'S ROOM TO LOOK AT PICTURES FROM SUMMER BREAK.
FISHING WAS REALLY FUN. I'D LIKE TO GO AGAIN.
IF I'M NOT HELD BACK A YEAR.
OH, THAT'D BE GOOD.
YOU SHOULD GO SOMETIME, WITH THE GANG.
...HE ALWAYS DOES THAT. PUSHES ME AWAY,
A LITTLE AT A TIME.
OH... NO! NO AWKWARD SILENCE!
SAY SOMETHING! TALK!


IT WASN'T UNTIL AFTER I FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM
THAT WE KEPT GETTING FARTHER AND FARTHER APART.
TALK...
ERK...
SHE'S GETTING DEPRESSED.
ドキドキ
B-DMP B-DMP
すーん
FORLORN
しょんぼり
GLOOM
...
MAYBE THAT WAS A LITTLE TOO OBVIOUS.
BUT IF SHE'S GOING TO GET HURT WHETHER I TELL HER STRAIGHT OR NOT...
THEN WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?
DELI

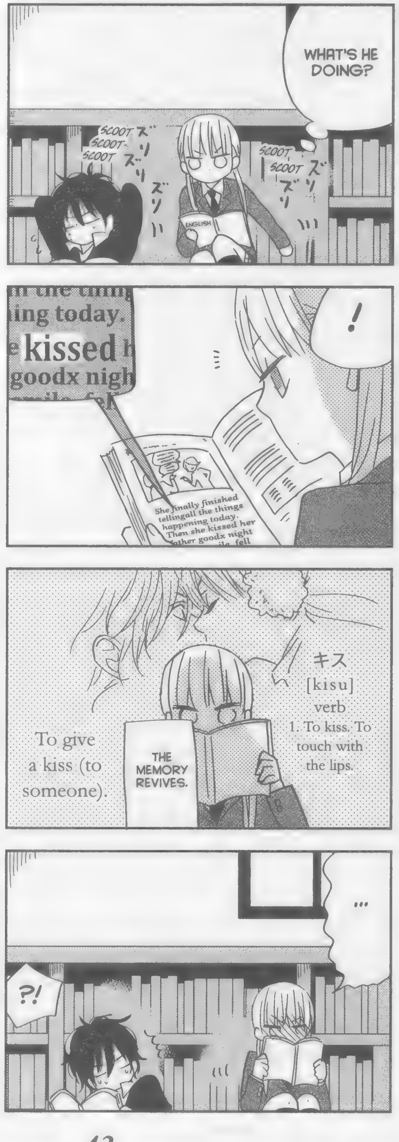

...NATSUME-CHAN.
DELI
DELI
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE TAKE THE LONG WAY BACK?


SIGN UP FOR A POINT CARD

IN THE LIBRARY


EFFORT...
...
B-DMP B-DMP
ドキドキ
B-DMP B-DMP
ORIGAMI
ENGLISH
THE MEMORY REVIVES.
WANDERLAND
TOUCHED WHILE
...
ズリ
SCOOT SCOOT
ENGLISH
?
SCOOT
ズリ

OH YEAH, WE DID DO THAT


WHAT'S HE DOING?
SCOOT SCOOT SCOOT
ズリズリ
SCOOT SCOOT
ズリズリ
ENGLISH
!
ing today.
kissed
goodx nigh
She finally finished tellingall the things happening today. Then she kissed her father goodx night
キス
[kisu]
verb
1. To kiss. To touch with the lips.
To give a kiss (to someone).
THE MEMORY REVIVES.
...
?!

CHAPTER 26: THE END OF A YEAR

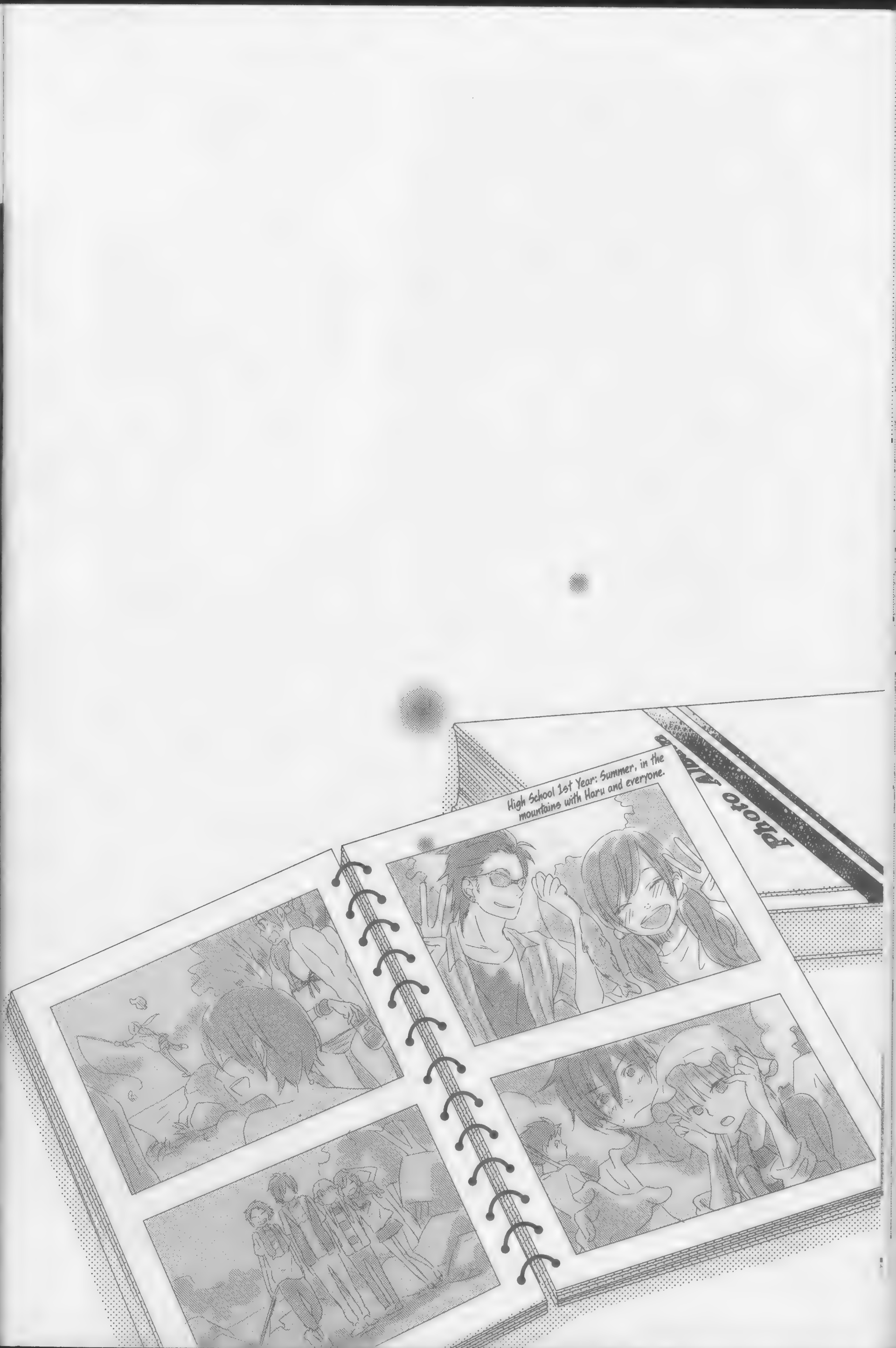
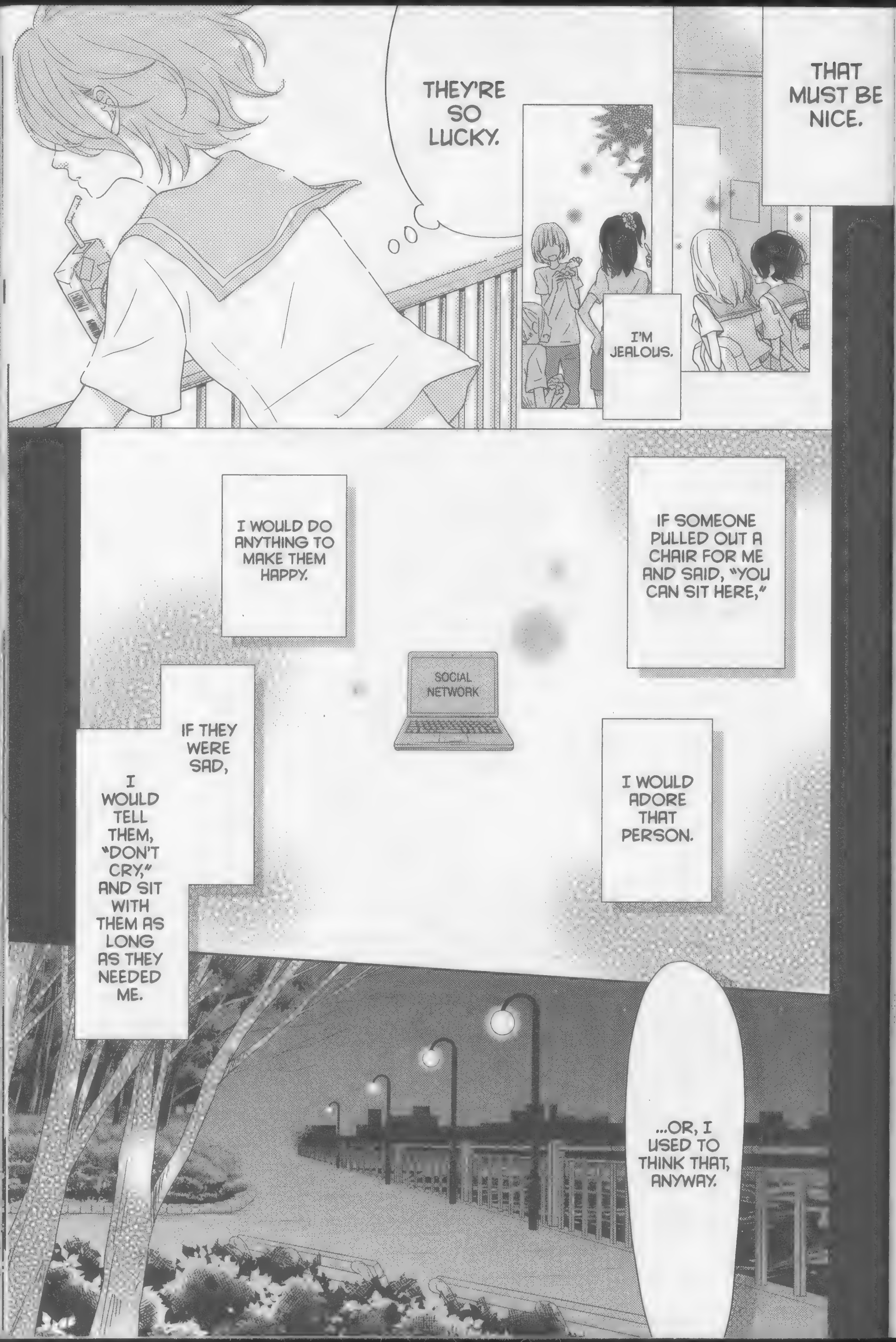
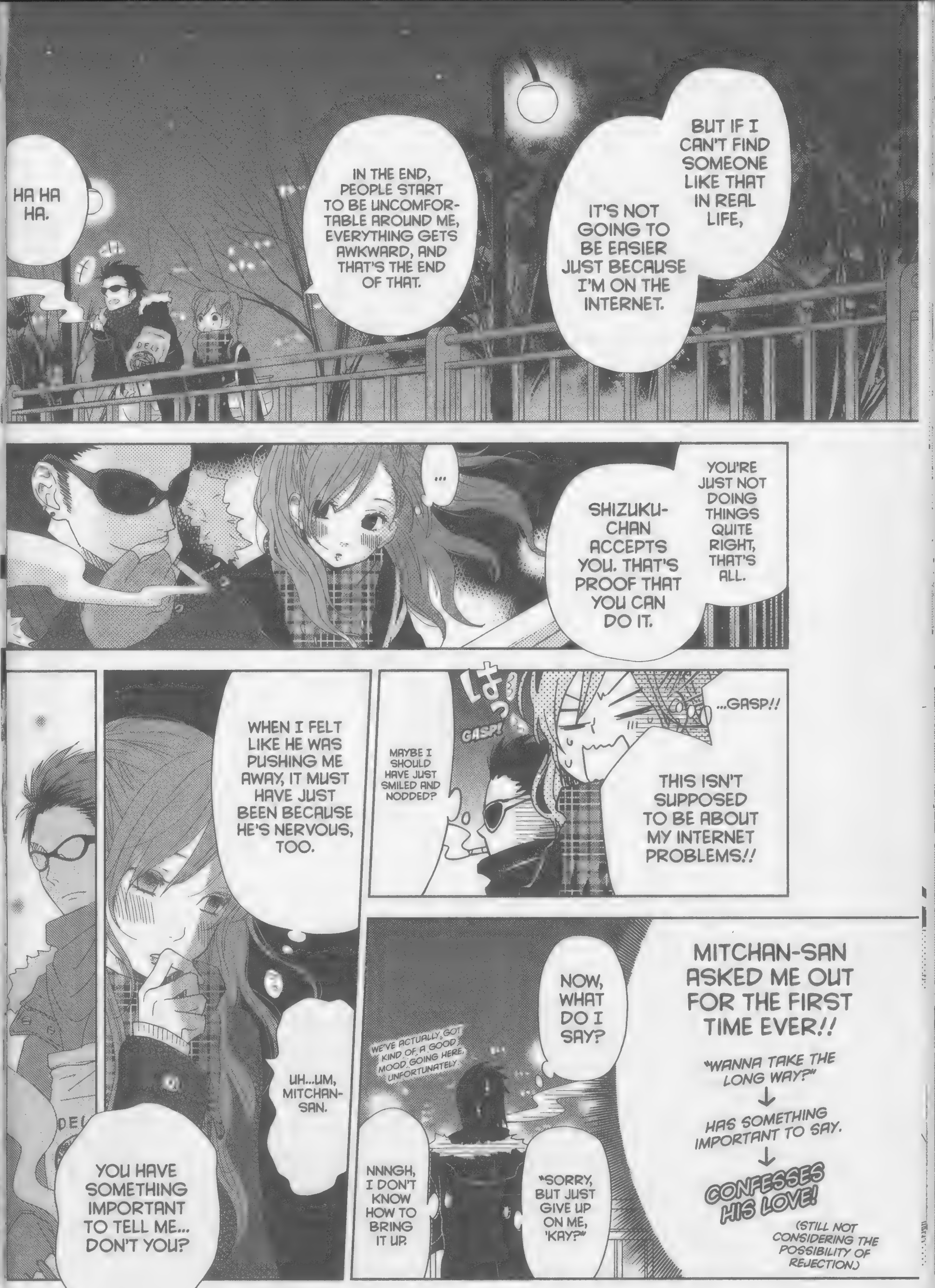
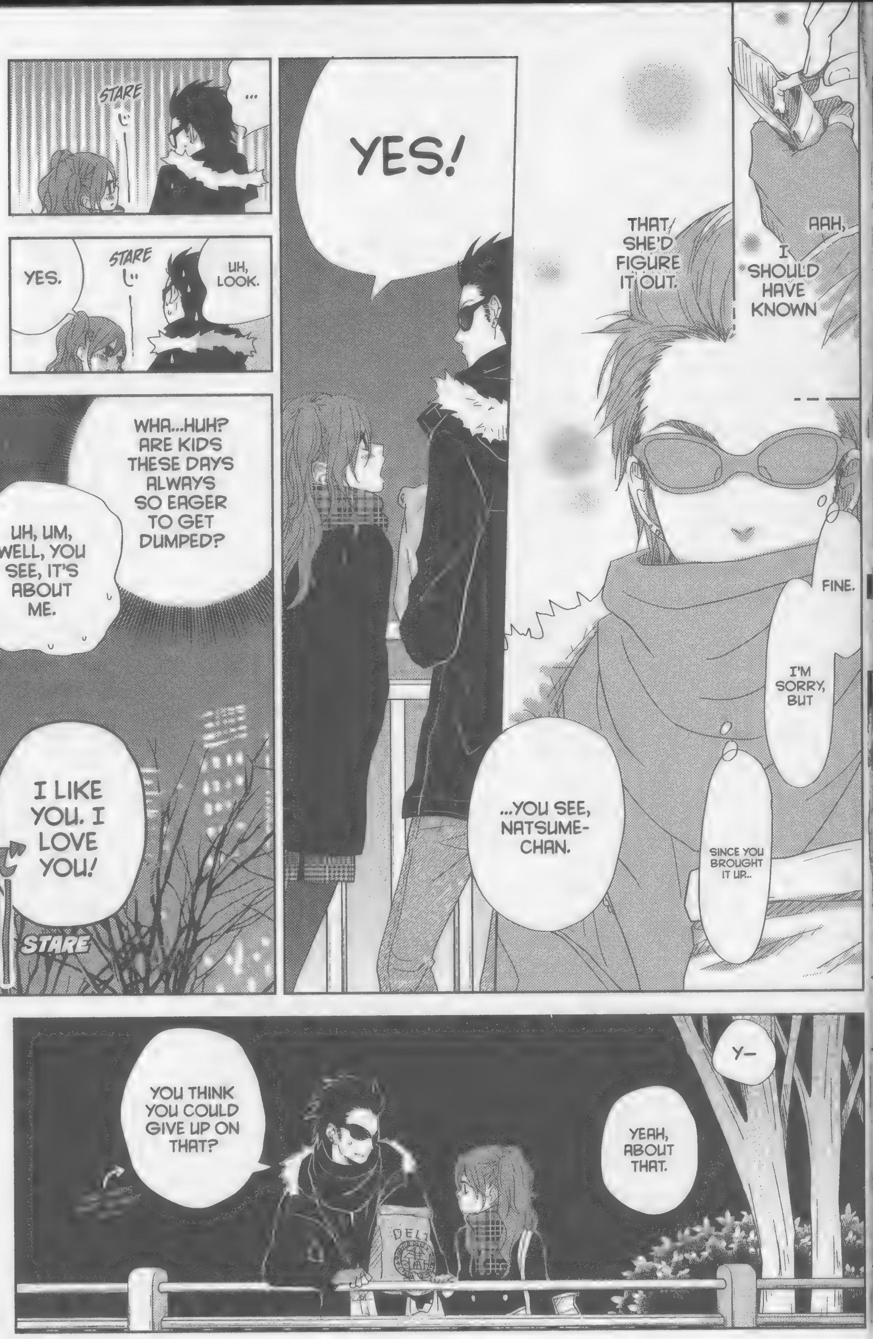
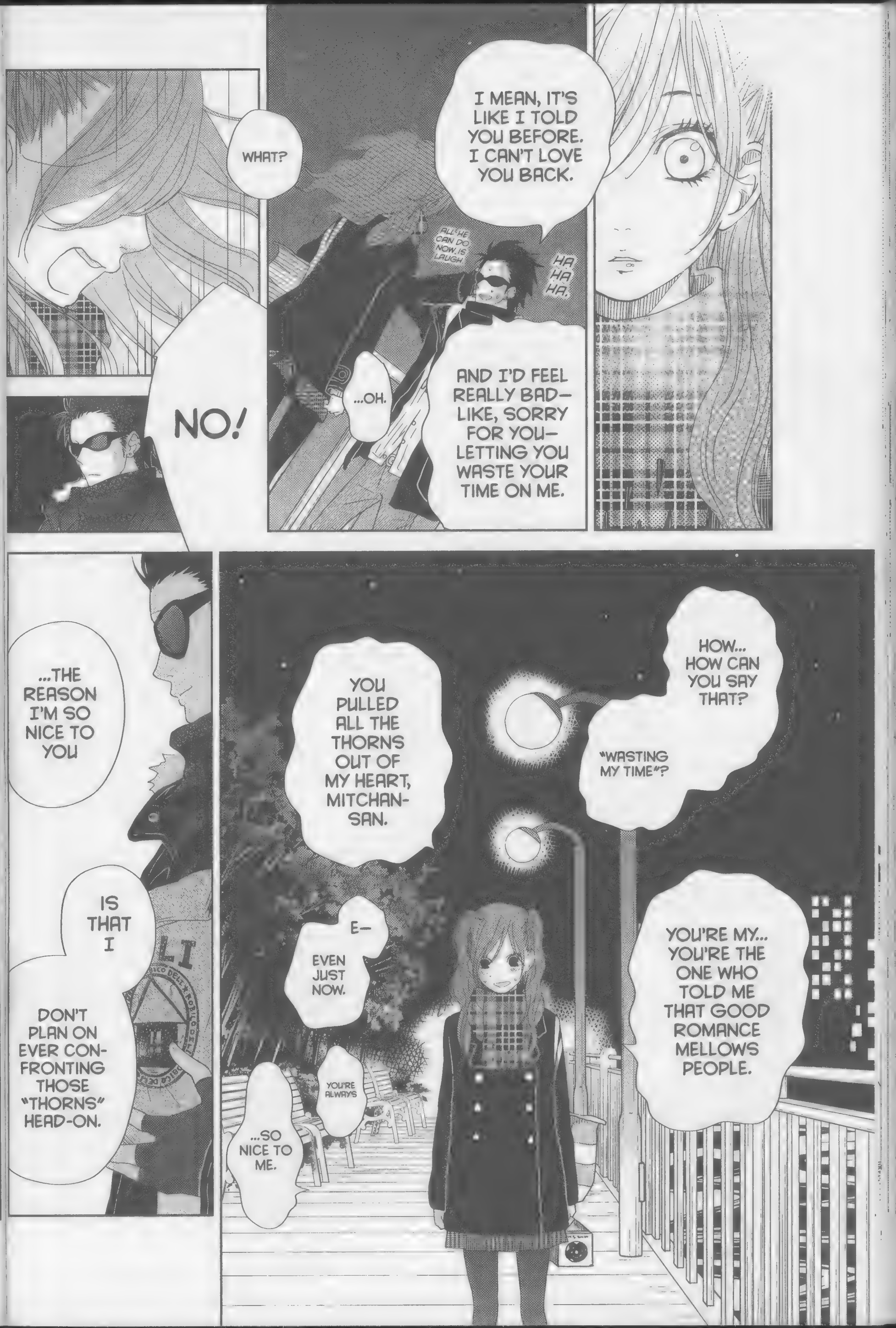


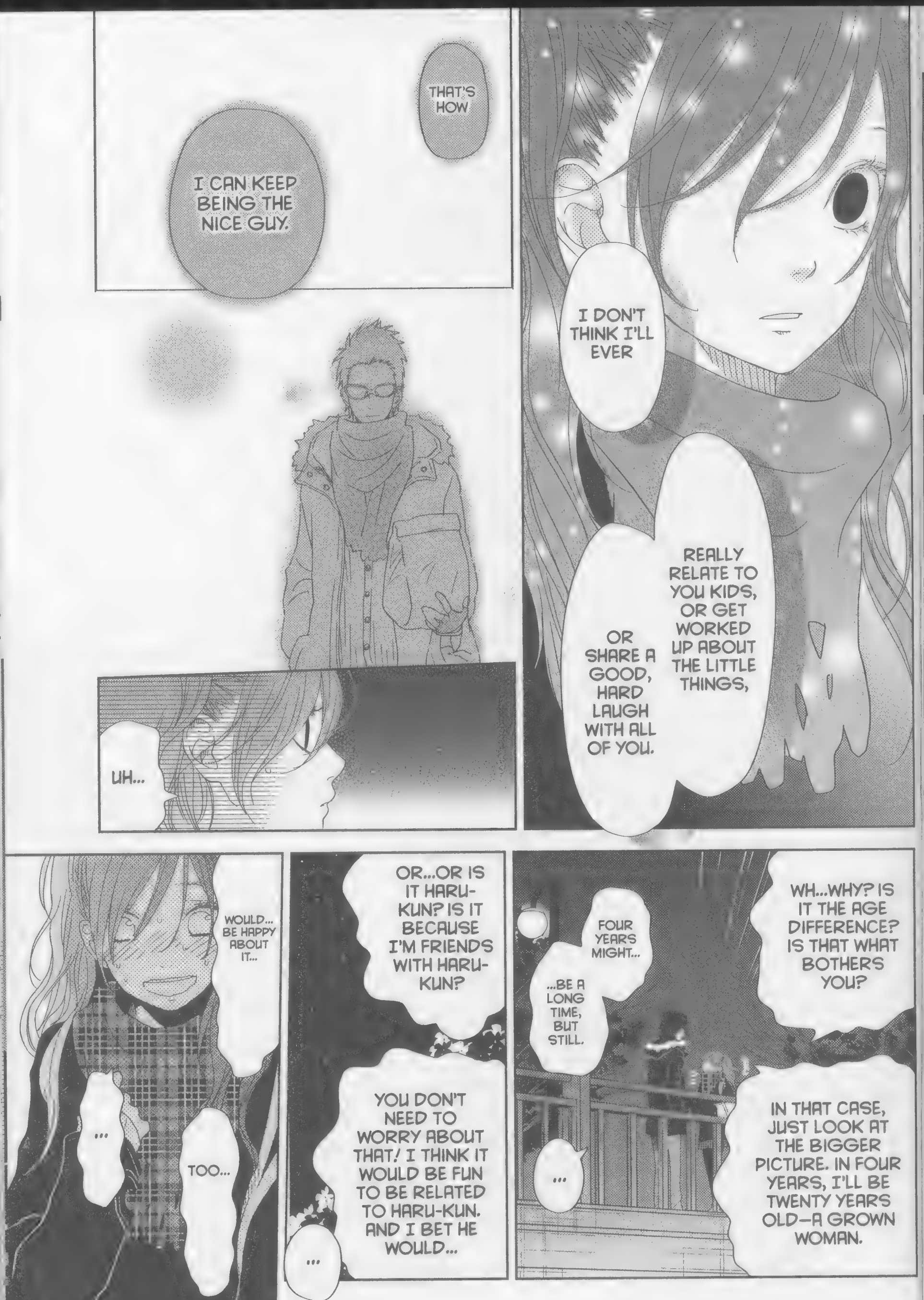
Photo Album
High School 1st Year: Summer, in the mountains with Haru and everyone.

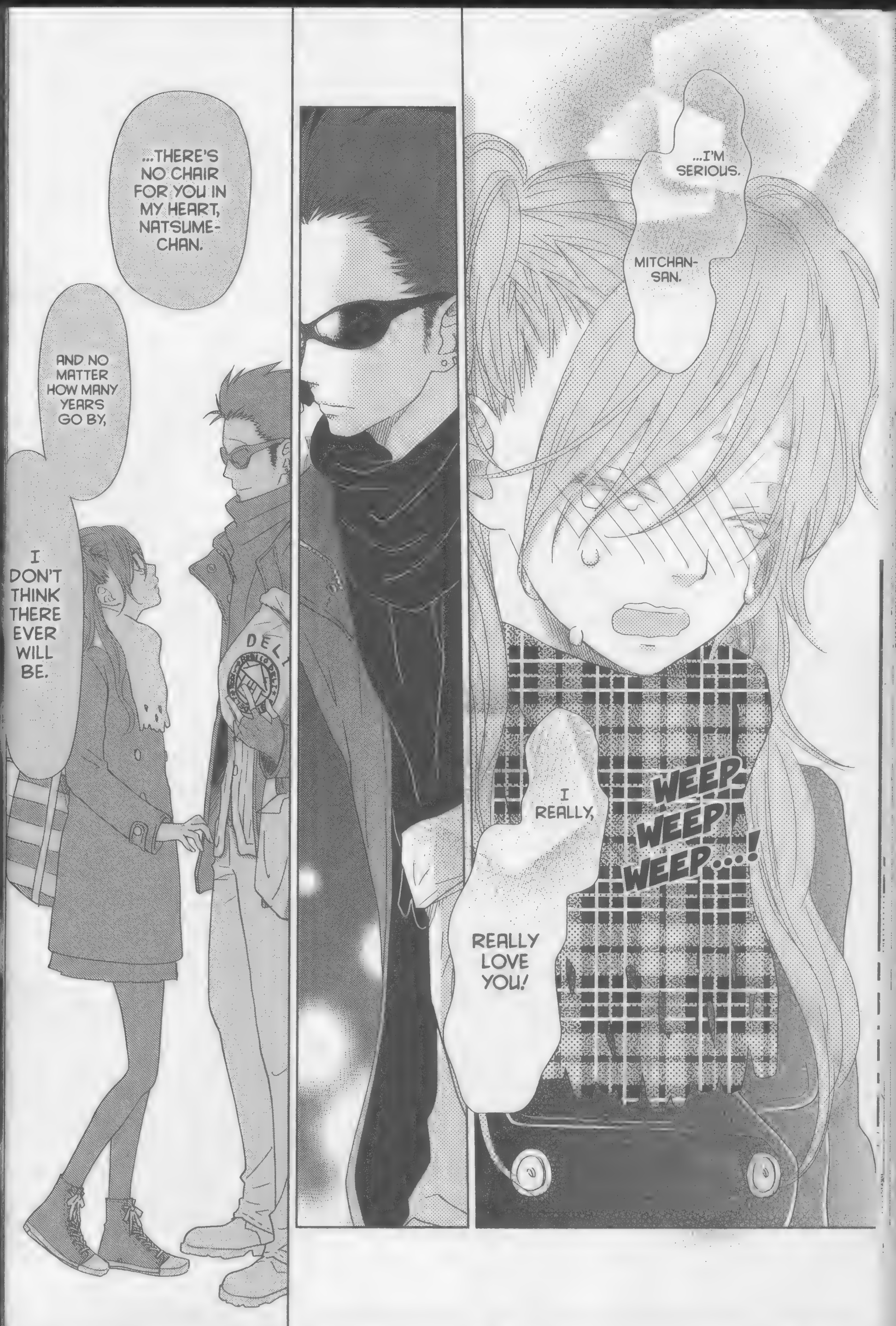

THAT MUST BE NICE.
I'M JEALOUS.
THEY'RE SO LUCKY.
IF SOMEONE PULLED OUT A CHAIR FOR ME AND SAID, "YOU CAN SIT HERE,"
I WOULD ADORE THAT PERSON.
SOCIAL NETWORK
I WOULD DO ANYTHING TO MAKE THEM HAPPY.
IF THEY WERE SAD,
I WOULD TELL THEM, "DON'T CRY," AND SIT WITH THEM AS LONG AS THEY NEEDED ME.
...OR, I USED TO THINK THAT, ANYWAY.

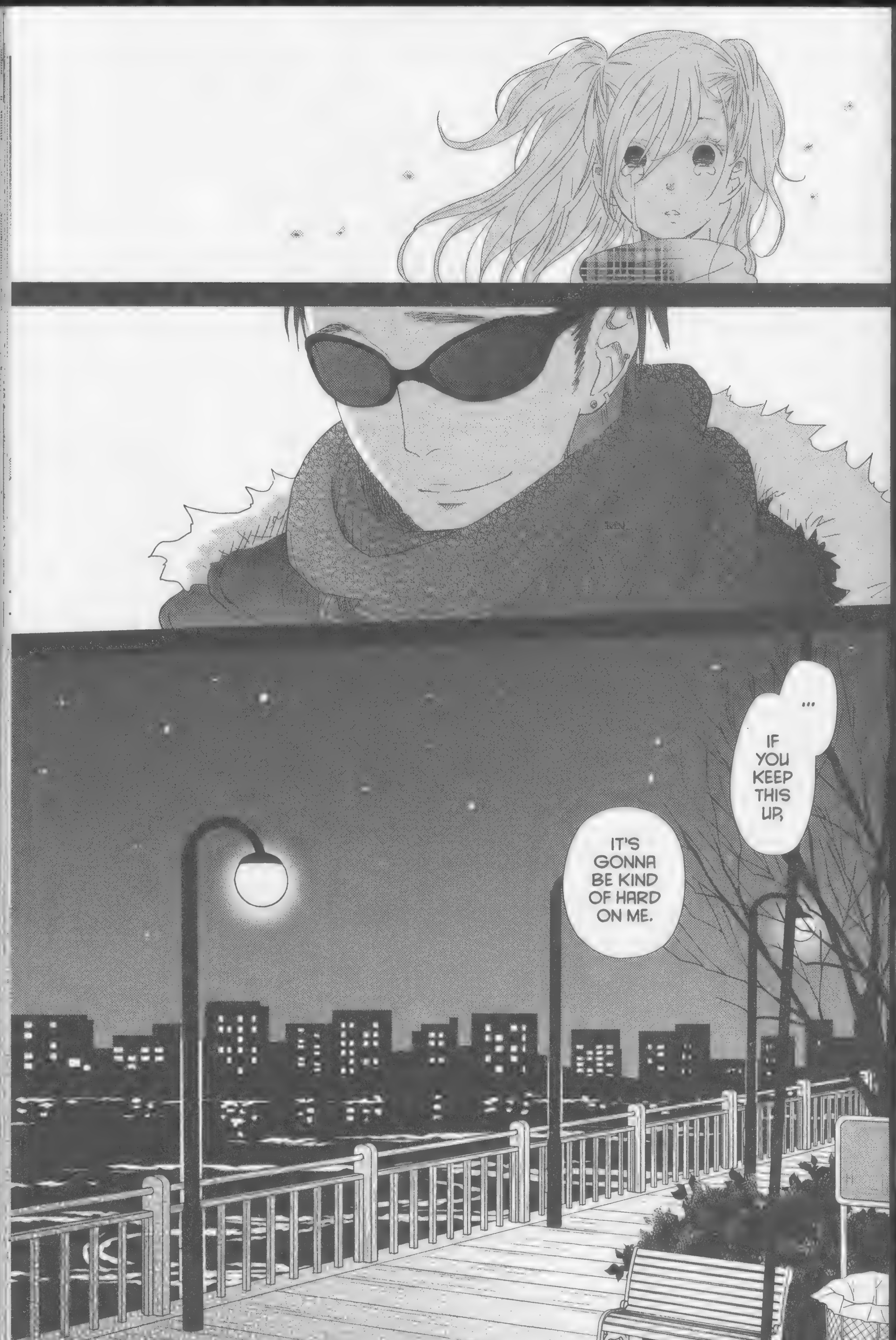

BUT IF I CAN'T FIND SOMEONE LIKE THAT IN REAL LIFE,
IT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASIER JUST BECAUSE I'M ON THE INTERNET.
IN THE END, PEOPLE START TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND ME, EVERYTHING GETS AWKWARD, AND THAT'S THE END OF THAT.
HA HA HA.
DELI
YOU'RE JUST NOT DOING THINGS QUITE RIGHT, THAT'S ALL.
SHIZUKU-CHAN ACCEPTS YOU. THAT'S PROOF THAT YOU CAN DO IT.
...
...GASP!!
はっ
GASP!
THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT MY INTERNET PROBLEMS!!
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE JUST SMILED AND NODDED?
WHEN I FELT LIKE HE WAS PUSHING ME AWAY, IT MUST HAVE JUST BEEN BECAUSE HE'S NERVOUS, TOO.
MITCHAN-SAN ASKED ME OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER!!
"WANNA TAKE THE LONG WAY?" ↓ HAS SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY. ↓ CONFESSES HIS LOVE!
(STILL NOT CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF REJECTION)
NOW, WHAT DO I SAY?
"SORRY, BUT JUST GIVE UP ON ME, 'KAY?"
NNNGH, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO BRING IT UP.
WE'VE ACTUALLY GOT KIND OF A GOOD MOOD GOING HERE, UNFORTUNATELY.
UH...UM, MITCHAN-SAN.
YOU HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL ME... DON'T YOU?
DELI

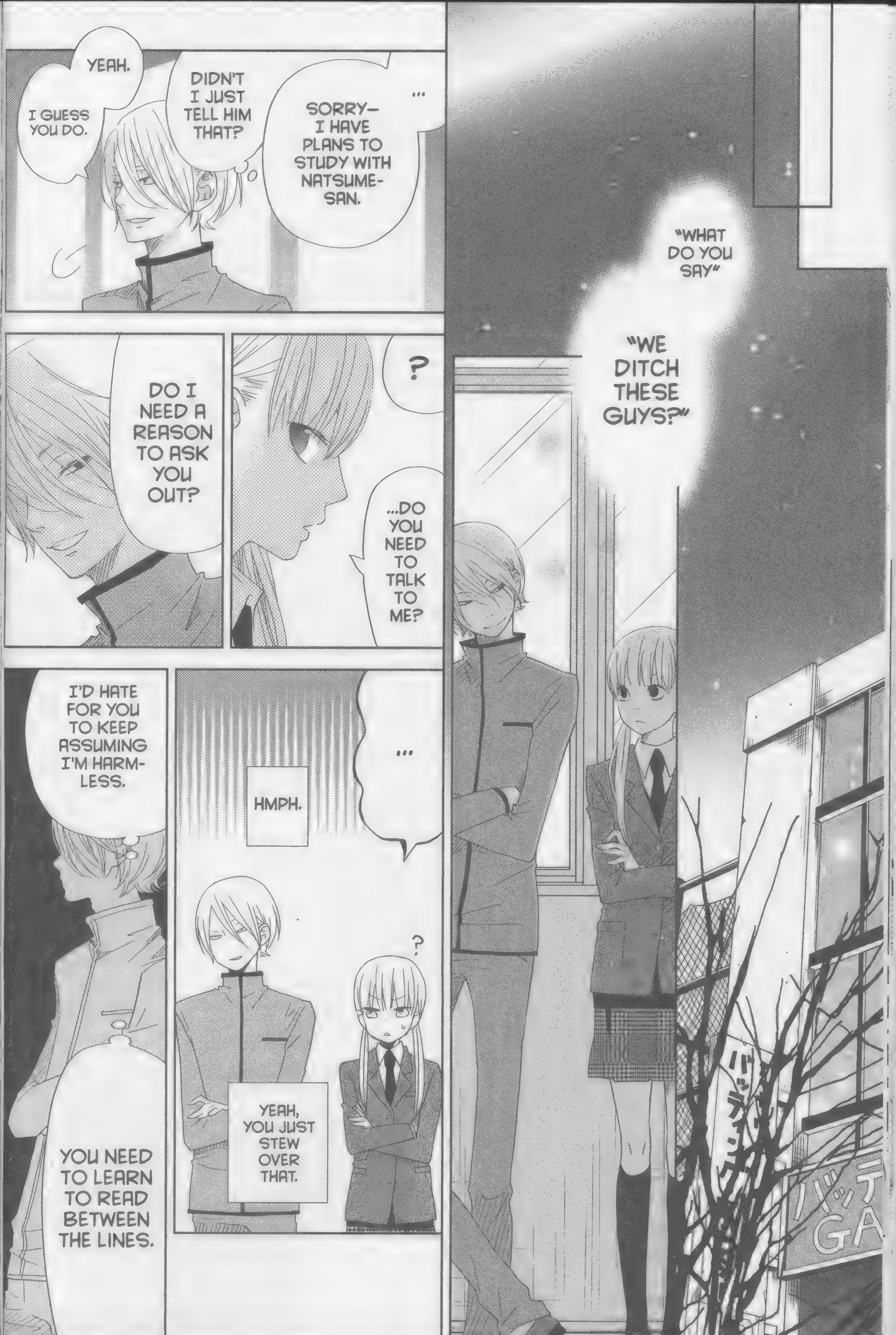

AAH, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN
THAT SHE'D FIGURE IT OUT.
YES!
FINE.
I'M SORRY, BUT
SINCE YOU BROUGHT IT UP...
...YOU SEE, NATSUME-CHAN.
...
STARE
UH, LOOK.
STARE
YES.
WHA...HUH? ARE KIDS THESE DAYS ALWAYS SO EAGER TO GET DUMPED?
UH, UM, WELL, YOU SEE, IT'S ABOUT ME.
I LIKE YOU. I LOVE YOU!
STARE
Y–
YEAH, ABOUT THAT.
YOU THINK YOU COULD GIVE UP ON THAT?
DELI

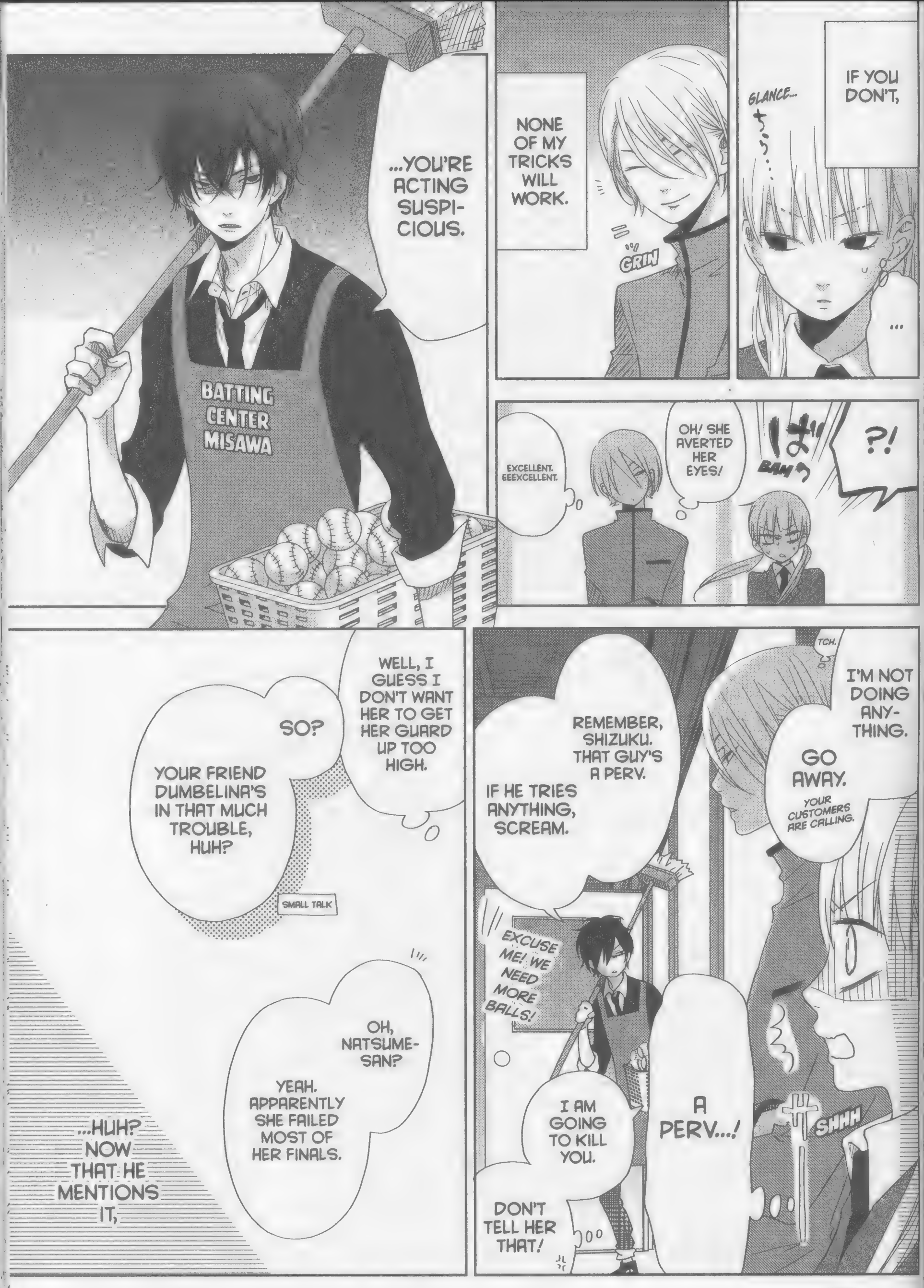

I MEAN, IT'S LIKE I TOLD YOU BEFORE. I CAN'T LOVE YOU BACK.
ALL HE CAN DO NOW IS LAUGH
HA HA HA.
...OH.
AND I'D FEEL REALLY BAD—LIKE, SORRY FOR YOU—LETTING YOU WASTE YOUR TIME ON ME.
WHAT?
NO!
HOW... HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
"WASTING MY TIME"?
YOU'RE MY... YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOLD ME THAT GOOD ROMANCE MELLOWS PEOPLE.
YOU PULLED ALL THE THORNS OUT OF MY HEART, MITCHAN-SAN.
E—
EVEN JUST NOW.
YOU'RE ALWAYS
...SO NICE TO ME.
...THE REASON I'M SO NICE TO YOU
IS THAT I
DON'T PLAN ON EVER CONFRONTING THOSE "THORNS" HEAD-ON.

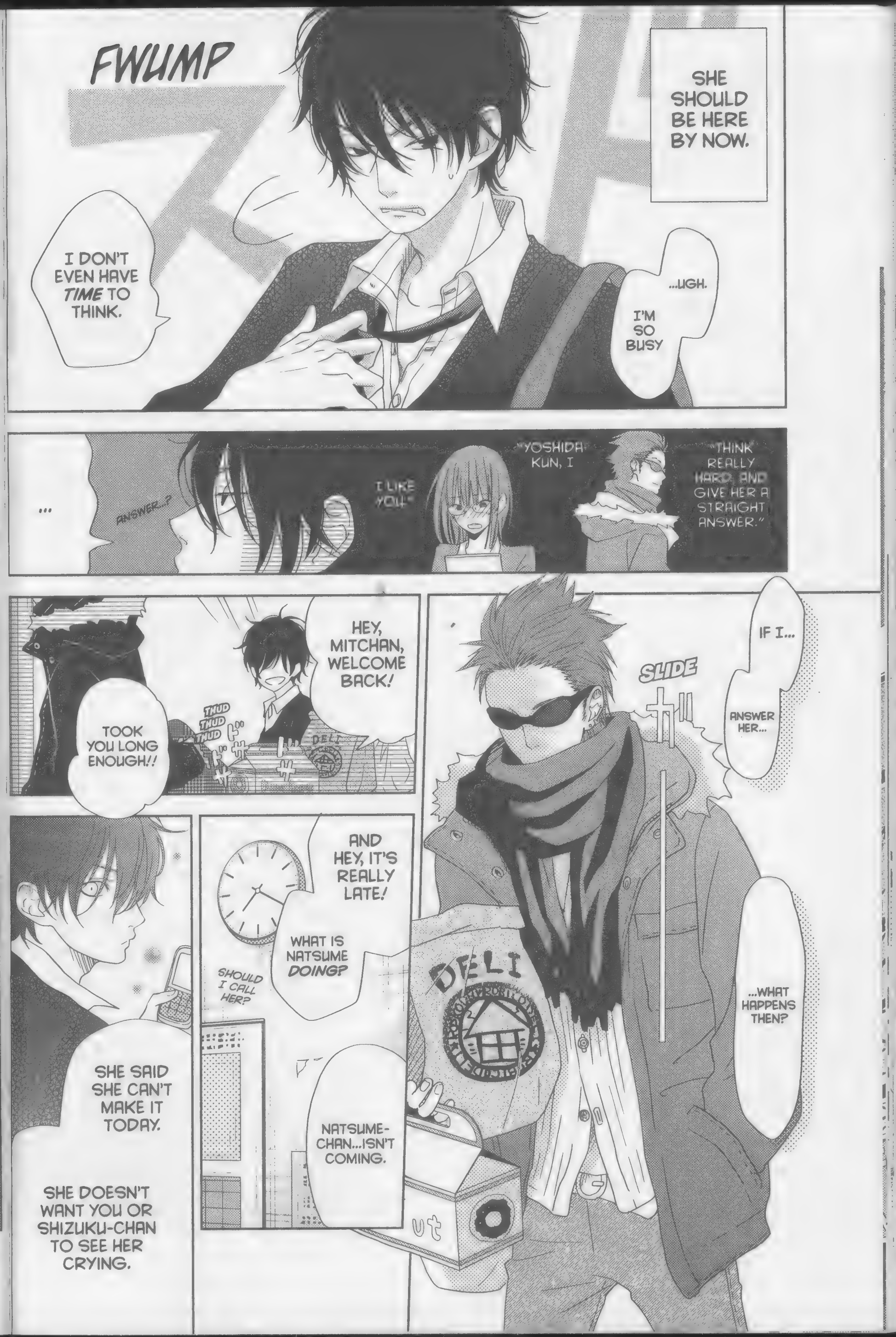

I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER
REALLY RELATE TO YOU KIDS, OR GET WORKED UP ABOUT THE LITTLE THINGS,
OR SHARE A GOOD, HARD LAUGH WITH ALL OF YOU.
THAT'S HOW
I CAN KEEP BEING THE NICE GUY.
UH...
WH...WHY? IS IT THE AGE DIFFERENCE? IS THAT WHAT BOTHERS YOU?
IN THAT CASE, JUST LOOK AT THE BIGGER PICTURE. IN FOUR YEARS, I'LL BE TWENTY YEARS OLD—A GROWN WOMAN.
FOUR YEARS MIGHT...
...BE A LONG TIME, BUT STILL.
...
OR...OR IS IT HARU-KUN? IS IT BECAUSE I'M FRIENDS WITH HARU-KUN?
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT! I THINK IT WOULD BE FUN TO BE RELATED TO HARU-KUN. AND I BET HE WOULD...
...
WOULD... BE HAPPY ABOUT IT...
TOO...
...

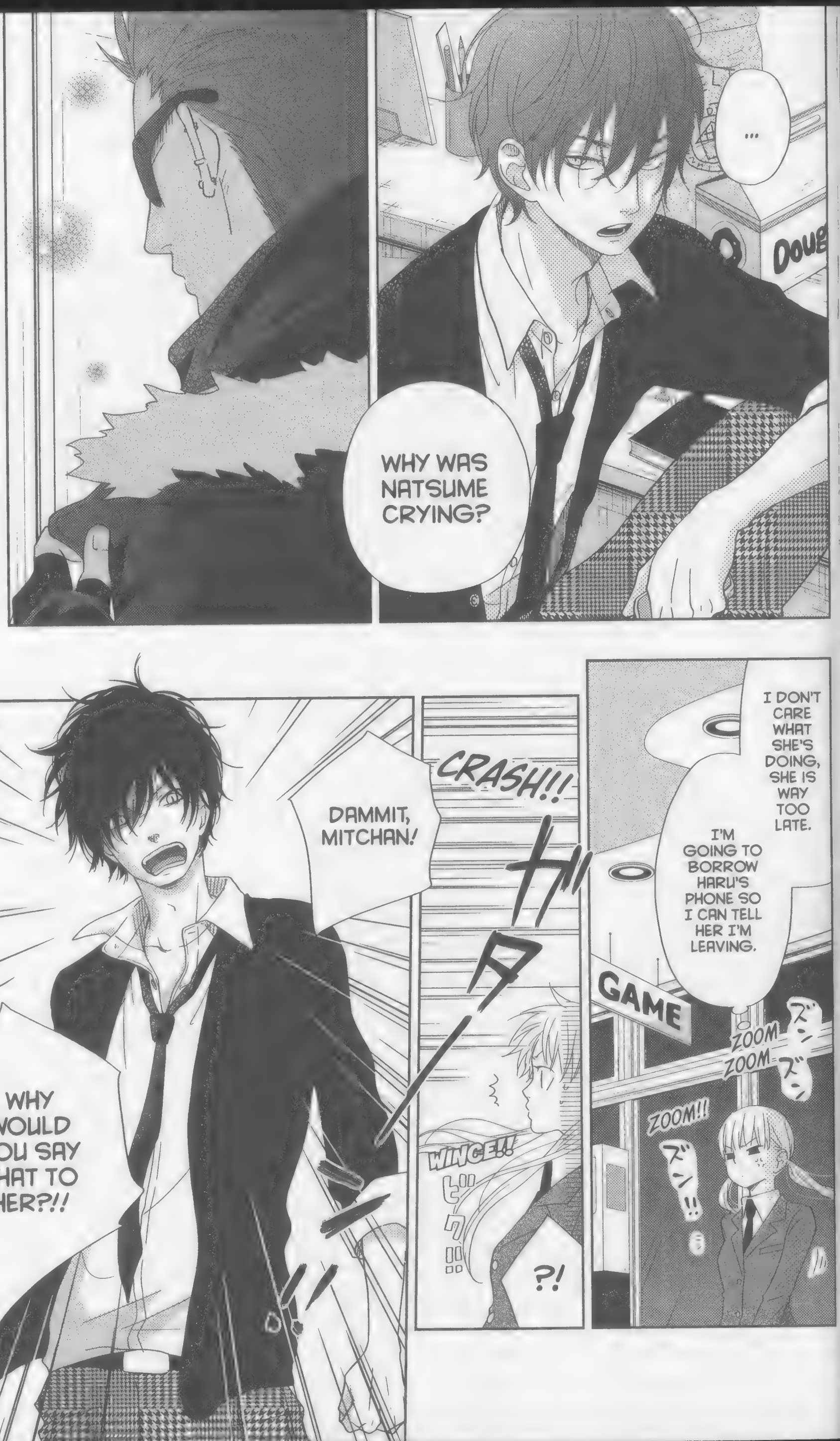

...I'M SERIOUS.
MITCHAN-SAN.
I REALLY,
REALLY LOVE YOU!
WEEP WEEP WEEP...!
...THERE'S NO CHAIR FOR YOU IN MY HEART, NATSUME-CHAN.
AND NO MATTER HOW MANY YEARS GO BY,
I DON'T THINK THERE EVER WILL BE.

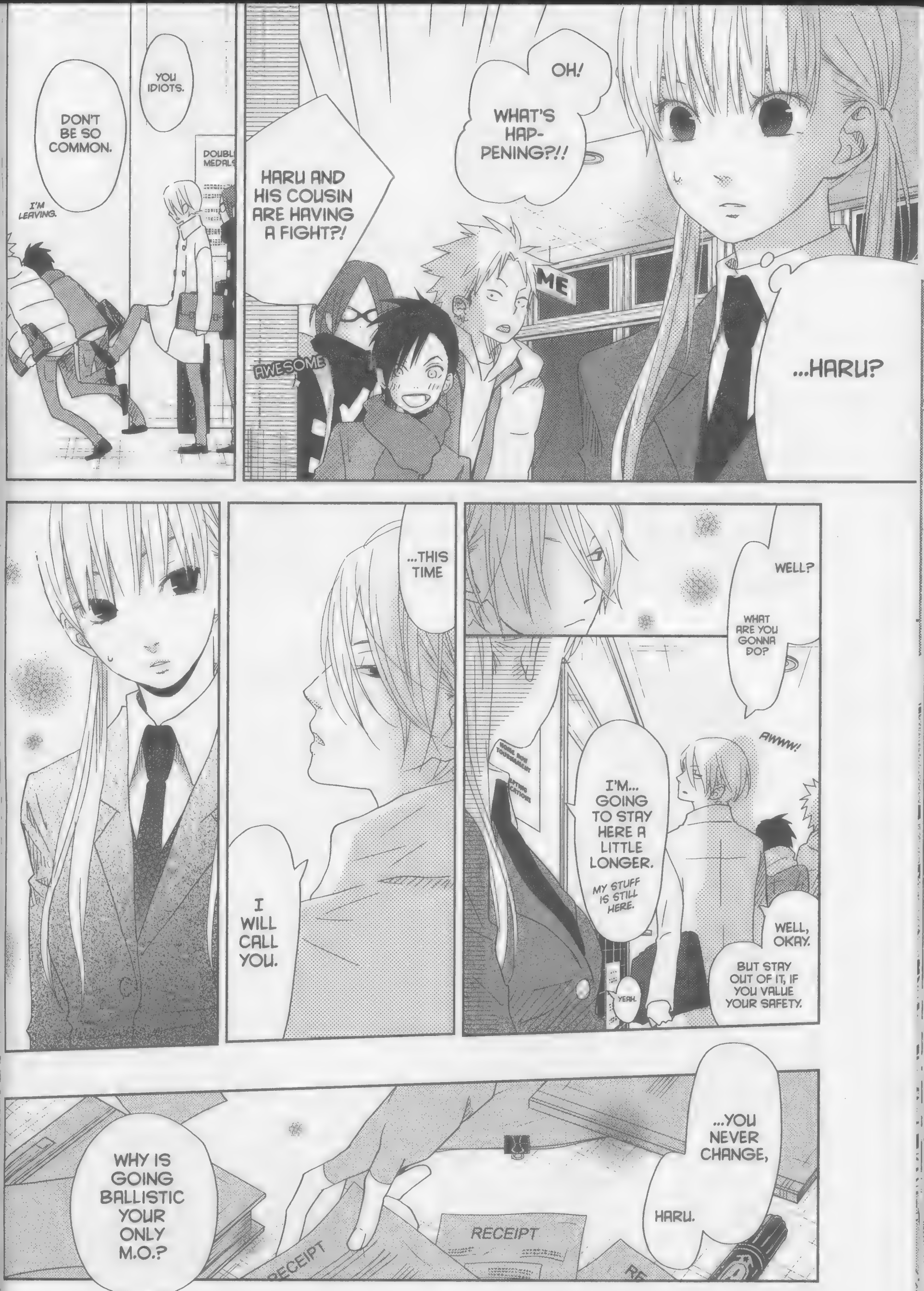

...
IF YOU KEEP THIS UP,
IT'S GONNA BE KIND OF HARD ON ME.

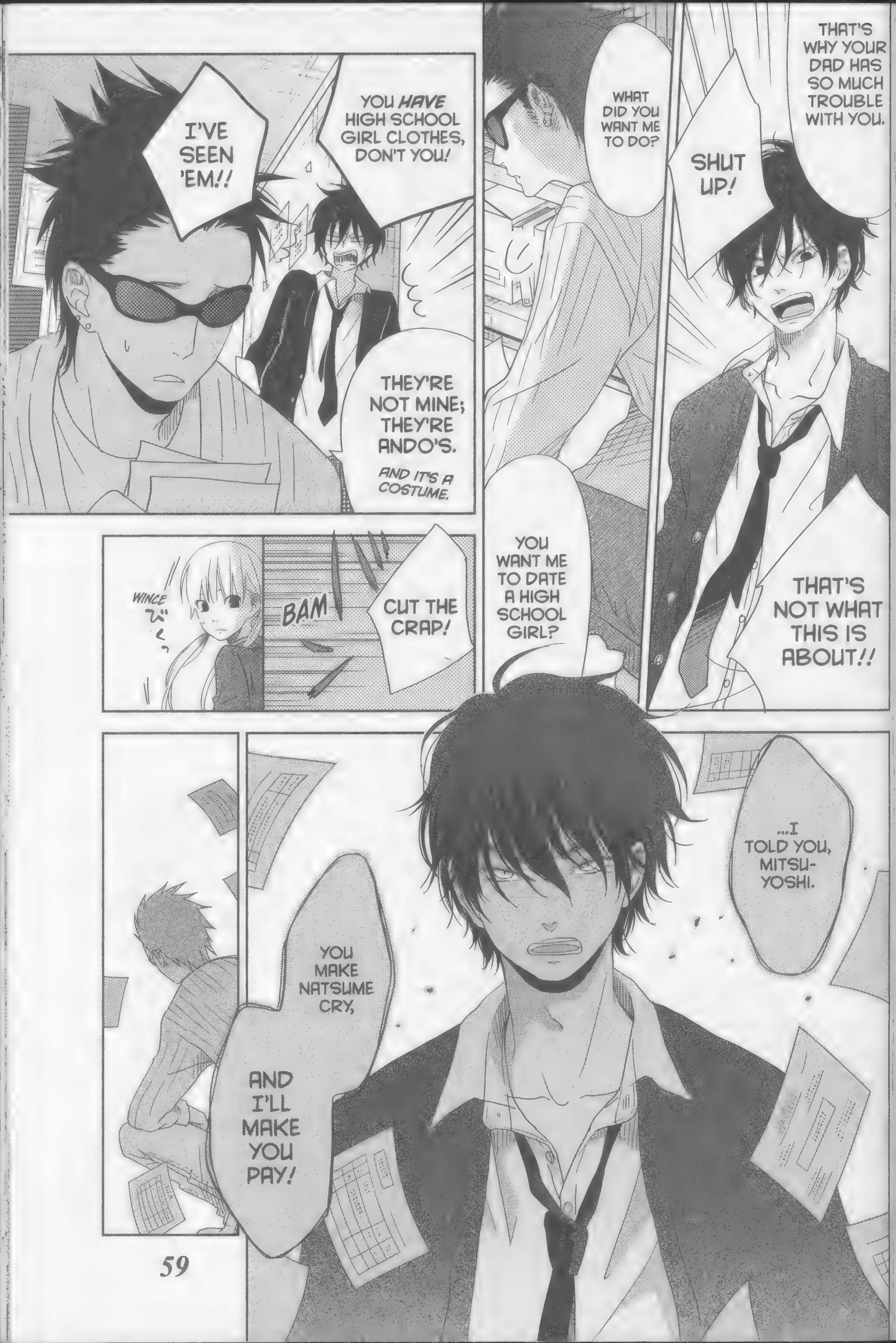

"WHAT DO YOU SAY"
"WE DITCH THESE GUYS?"
...
SORRY— I HAVE PLANS TO STUDY WITH NATSUME-SAN.
DIDN'T I JUST TELL HIM THAT?
YEAH.
I GUESS YOU DO.
?
...DO YOU NEED TO TALK TO ME?
DO I NEED A REASON TO ASK YOU OUT?
...
HMPH.
I'D HATE FOR YOU TO KEEP ASSUMING I'M HARMLESS.
?
YEAH, YOU JUST STEW OVER THAT.
YOU NEED TO LEARN TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES.
バッテ
GA

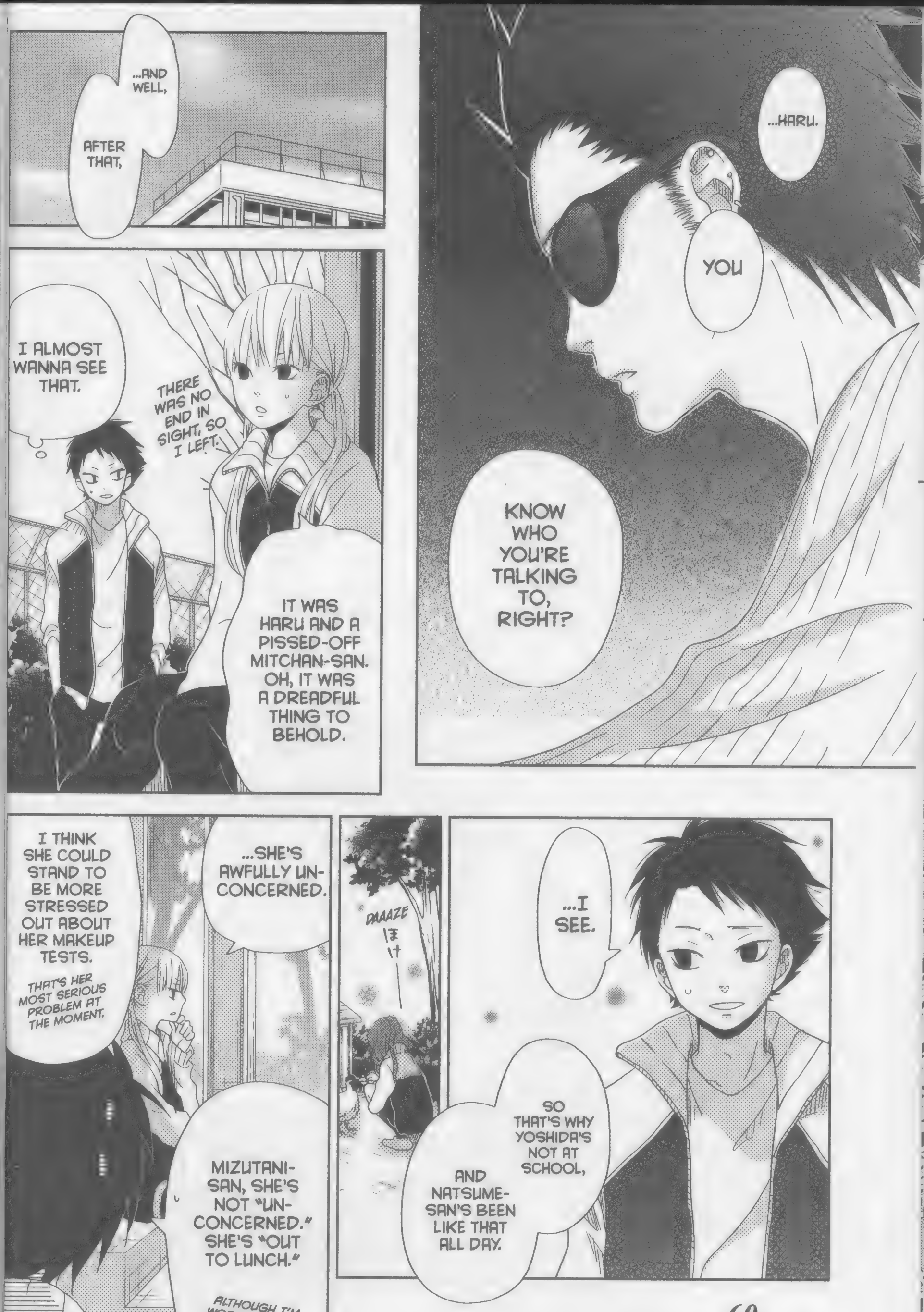

IF YOU DON'T,
GLANCE...
ちら…
...
NONE OF MY TRICKS WILL WORK.
GRIN
?!
ばっ
BAM
OH! SHE AVERTED HER EYES!
EXCELLENT. EEEXCELLENT.
...YOU'RE ACTING SUSPICIOUS.
BATTING CENTER MISAWA
I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING.
TCH.
GO AWAY.
YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE CALLING.
A PERV...!
SHHH
REMEMBER, SHIZUKU. THAT GUY'S A PERV.
IF HE TRIES ANYTHING, SCREAM.
EXCUSE ME! WE NEED MORE BALLS!
I AM GOING TO KILL YOU.
DON'T TELL HER THAT!
WELL, I GUESS I DON'T WANT HER TO GET HER GUARD UP TOO HIGH.
SO?
YOUR FRIEND DUMBELINA'S IN THAT MUCH TROUBLE, HUH?
SMALL TALK
OH, NATSUME-SAN?
YEAH. APPARENTLY SHE FAILED MOST OF HER FINALS.
...HUH? NOW THAT HE MENTIONS IT,

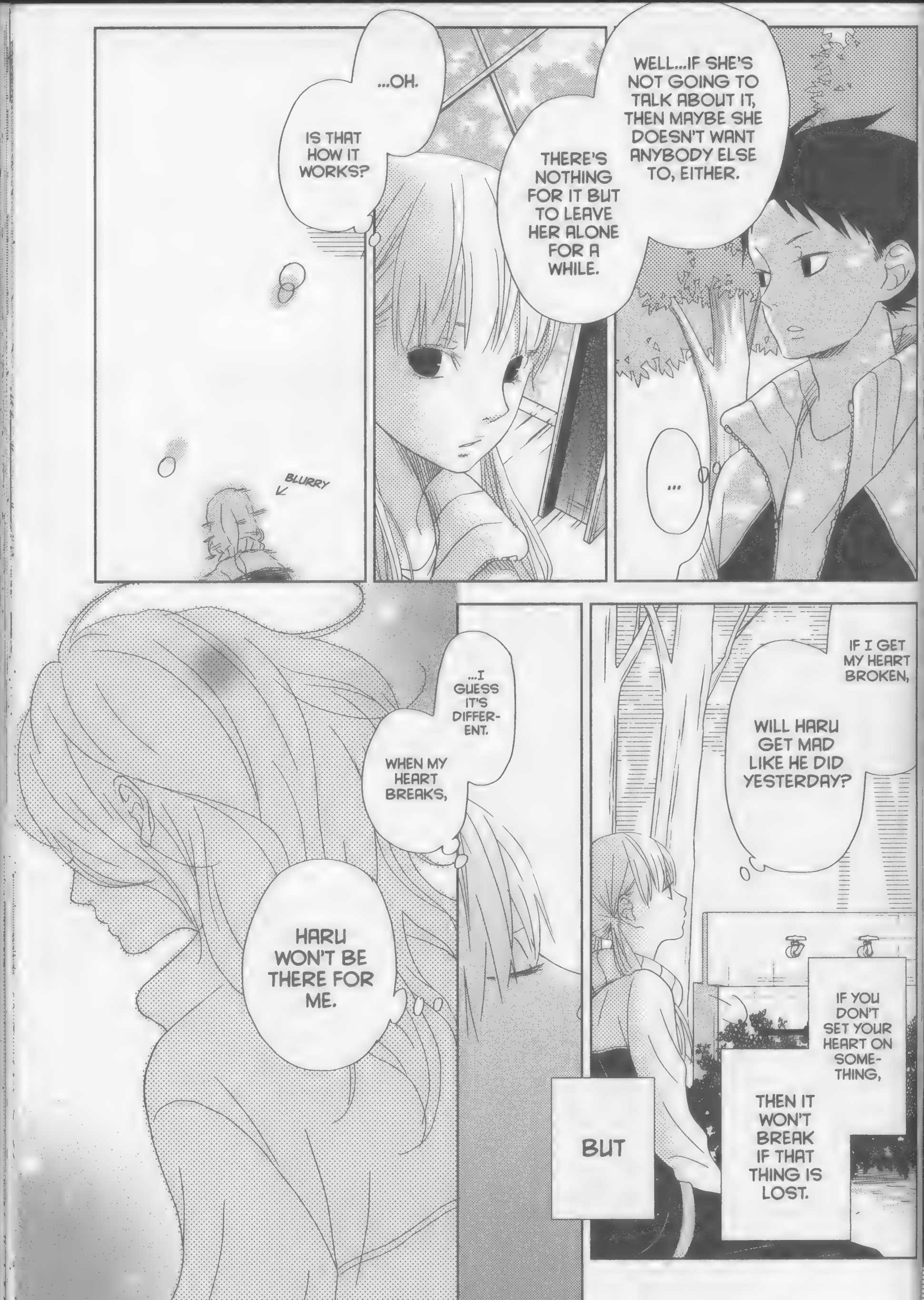

FWUMP
SHE SHOULD BE HERE BY NOW.
...UGH.
I'M SO BUSY
I DON'T EVEN HAVE *TIME* TO THINK.
"THINK REALLY HARD, AND GIVE HER A STRAIGHT ANSWER."
"YOSHIDA-KUN, I
I LIKE YOU."
ANSWER...?
...
IF I...
SLIDE
ANSWER HER...
...WHAT HAPPENS THEN?
HEY, MITCHAN, WELCOME BACK!
TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH!!
THUD THUD THUD
DELI
AND HEY, IT'S REALLY LATE!
WHAT IS NATSUME *DOING?*
SHOULD I CALL HER?
NATSUME-CHAN...ISN'T COMING.
SHE SAID SHE CAN'T MAKE IT TODAY.
SHE DOESN'T WANT YOU OR SHIZUKU-CHAN TO SEE HER CRYING.

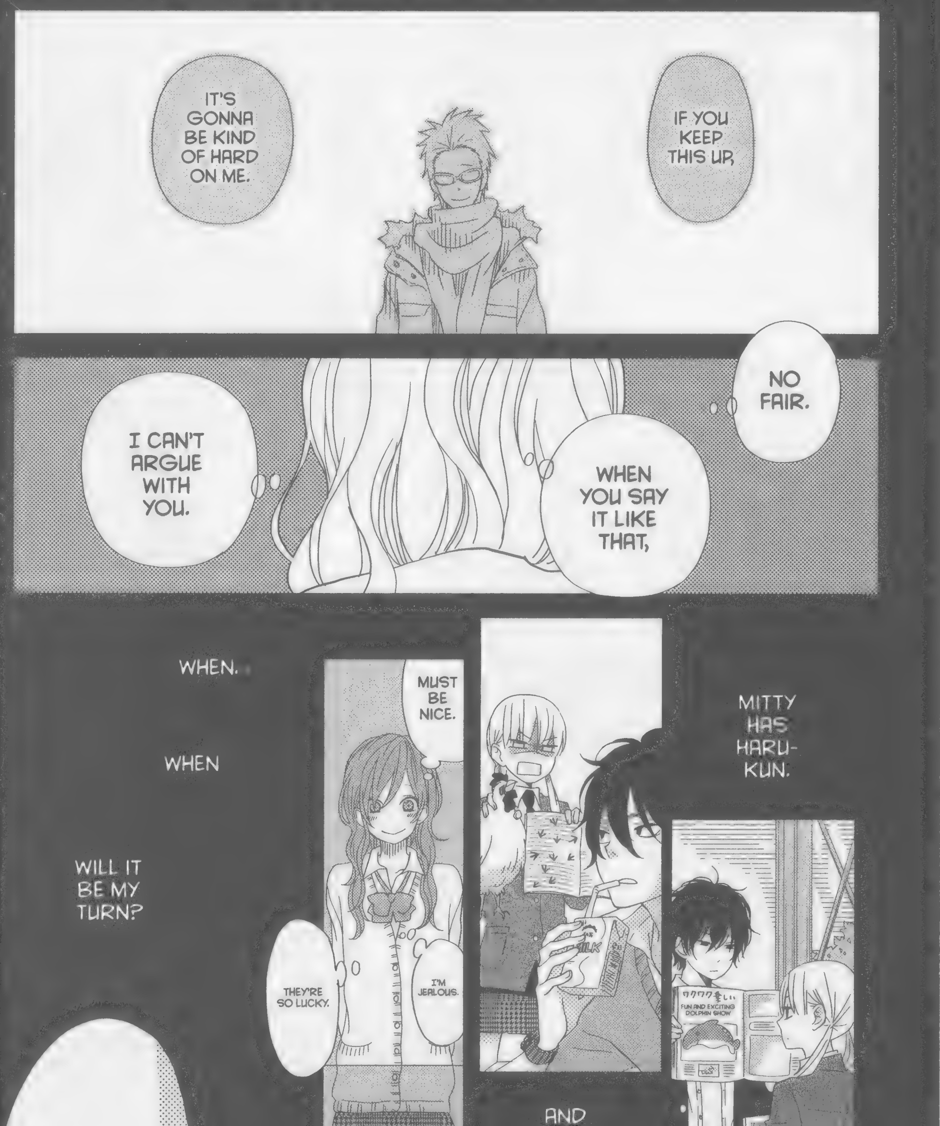

...
WHY WAS NATSUME CRYING?
Doug
I DON'T CARE WHAT SHE'S DOING, SHE IS WAY TOO LATE.
I'M GOING TO BORROW HARU'S PHONE SO I CAN TELL HER I'M LEAVING.
GAME
ZOOM ZOOM
ZOOM!!
CRASH!!
WINCE!!
?!
DAMMIT, MITCHAN!
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT TO HER?!!

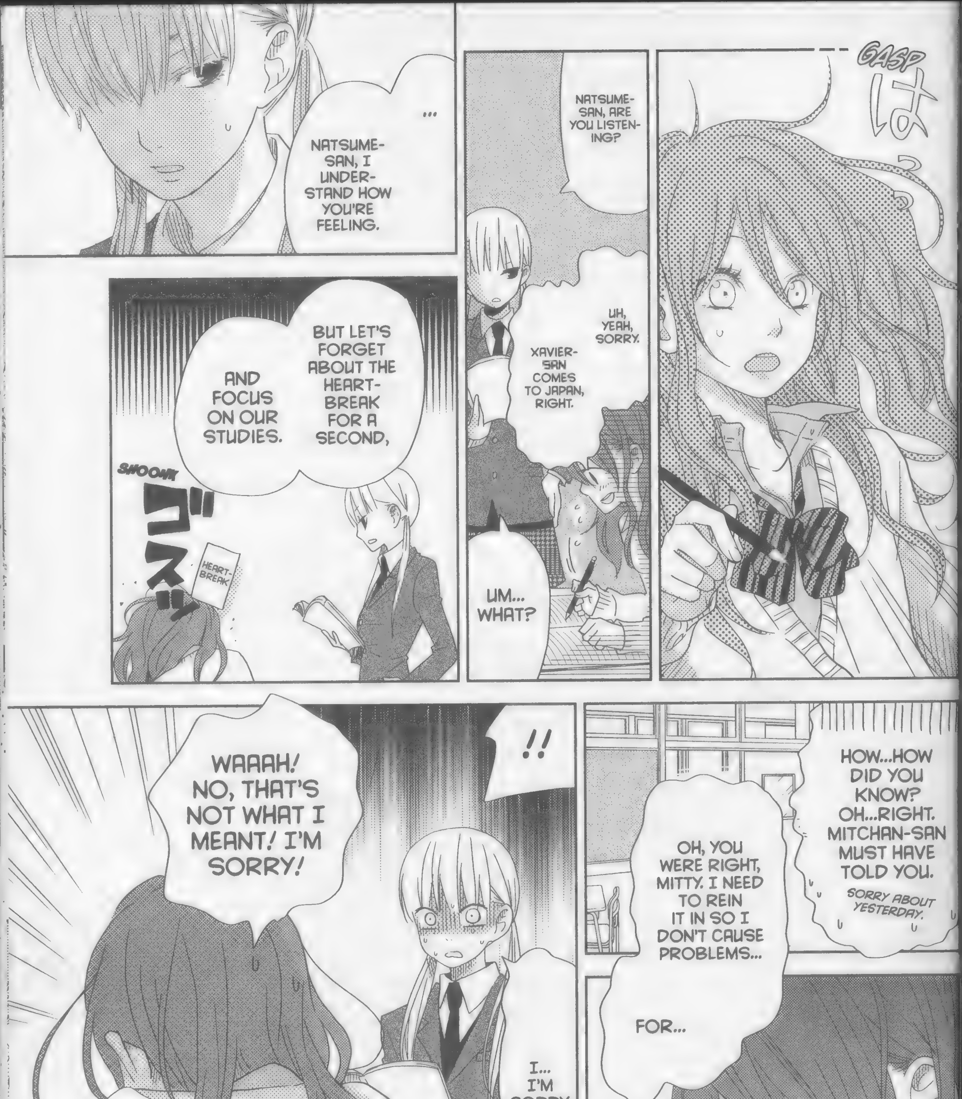

OH!
WHAT'S HAP-PENING?!!
...HARU?
ME
HARU AND HIS COUSIN ARE HAVING A FIGHT?!
AWESOME
YOU IDIOTS.
DON'T BE SO COMMON.
DOUBL MEDALS
I'M LEAVING.
WELL?
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?
AWWW!
I'M... GOING TO STAY HERE A LITTLE LONGER.
MY STUFF IS STILL HERE.
WELL, OKAY.
BUT STAY OUT OF IT, IF YOU VALUE YOUR SAFETY.
YEAH.
...THIS TIME
I WILL CALL YOU.
...YOU NEVER CHANGE,
HARU.
WHY IS GOING BALLISTIC YOUR ONLY M.O.?
RECEIPT
RECEIPT

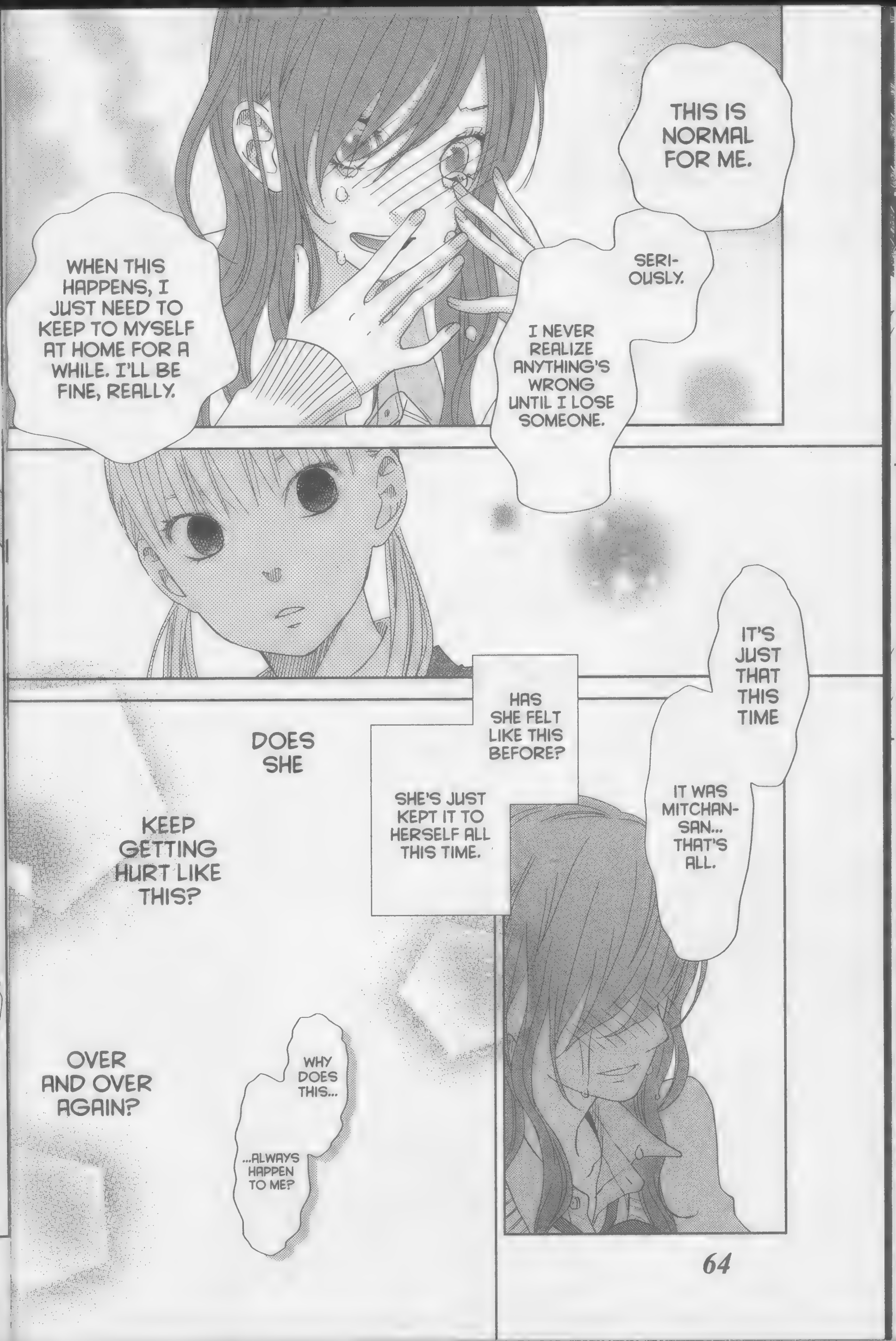

THAT'S WHY YOUR DAD HAS SO MUCH TROUBLE WITH YOU.
SHUT UP!
WHAT DID YOU WANT ME TO DO?
THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!!
YOU WANT ME TO DATE A HIGH SCHOOL GIRL?
YOU HAVE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL CLOTHES, DON'T YOU!
I'VE SEEN 'EM!!
THEY'RE NOT MINE; THEY'RE ANDO'S.
AND IT'S A COSTUME.
CUT THE CRAP!
BAM
WINCE
...I TOLD YOU, MITSUYOSHI.
YOU MAKE NATSUME CRY,
AND I'LL MAKE YOU PAY!

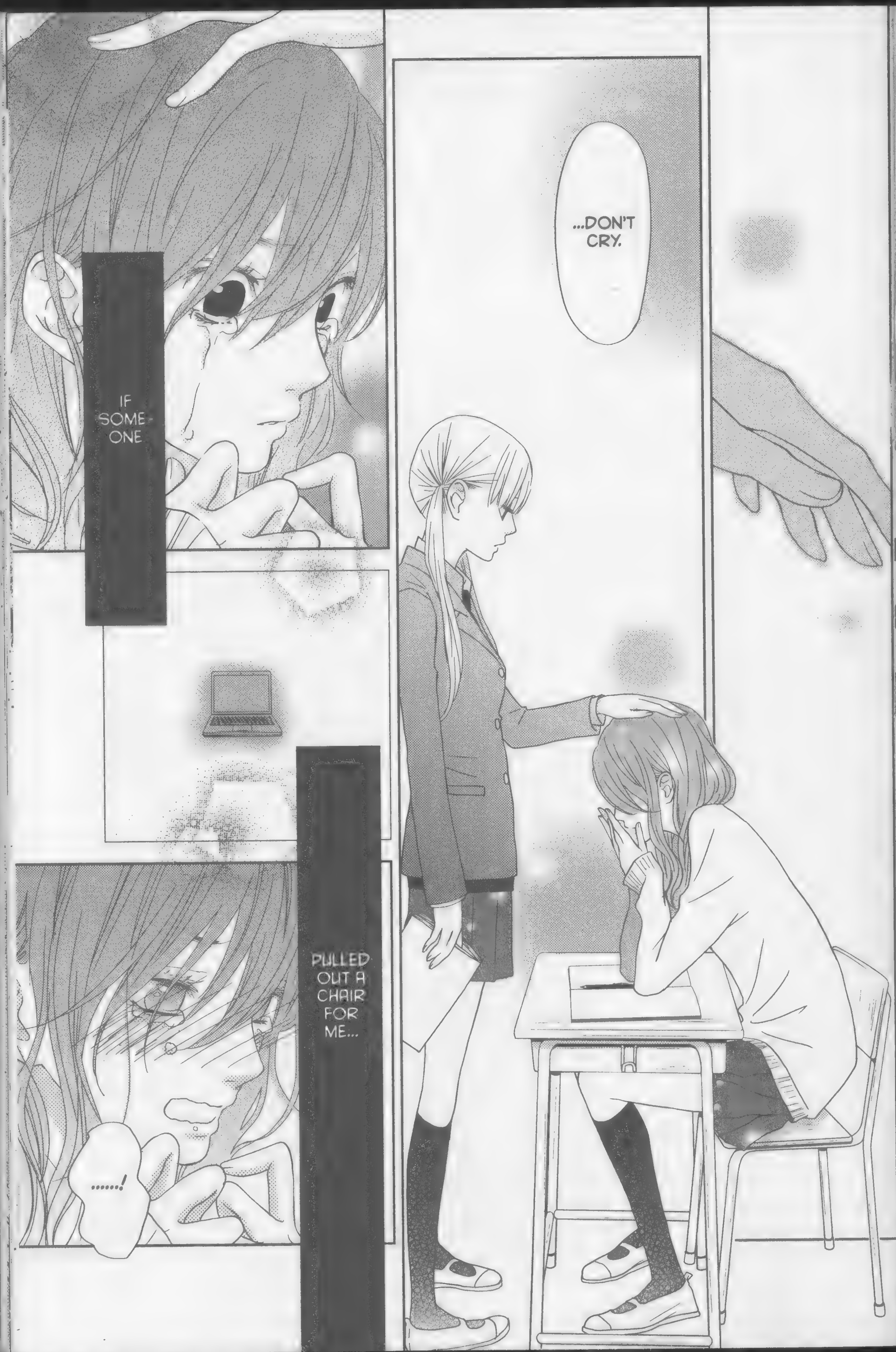

...HARU.
YOU
KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO, RIGHT?
...AND WELL,
AFTER THAT,
THERE WAS NO END IN SIGHT, SO I LEFT.
IT WAS HARU AND A PISSED-OFF MITCHAN-SAN. OH, IT WAS A DREADFUL THING TO BEHOLD.
I ALMOST WANNA SEE THAT.
...I SEE.
SO THAT'S WHY YOSHIDA'S NOT AT SCHOOL,
AND NATSUME-SAN'S BEEN LIKE THAT ALL DAY.
DAAAZE
ほけ
...SHE'S AWFULLY UNCONCERNED.
I THINK SHE COULD STAND TO BE MORE STRESSED OUT ABOUT HER MAKEUP TESTS.
THAT'S HER MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM AT THE MOMENT.
MIZUTANI-SAN, SHE'S NOT "UNCONCERNED." SHE'S "OUT TO LUNCH."
ALTHOUGH I'M WORRIED ABOUT THAT, TOO.

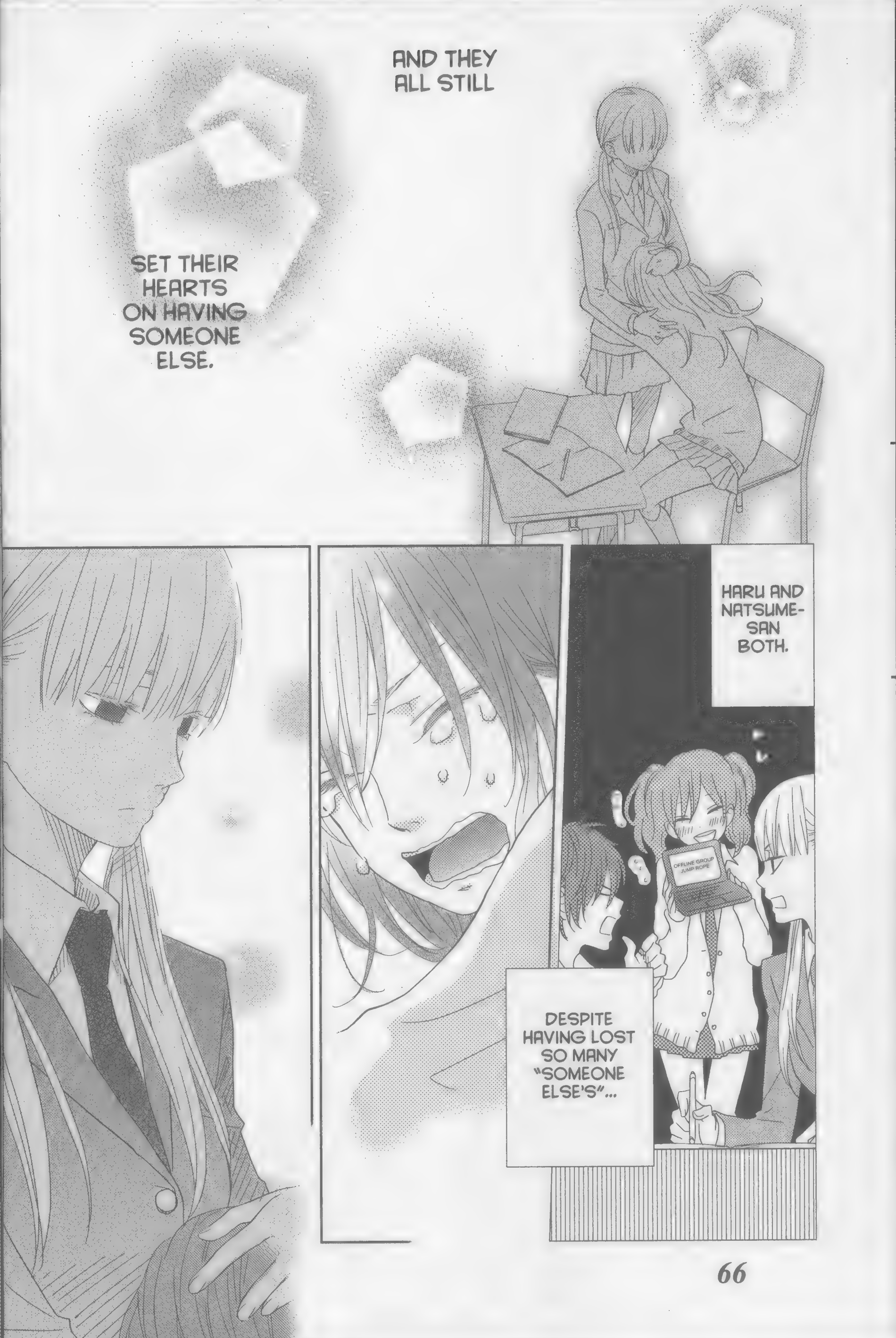

WELL...IF SHE'S NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT IT, THEN MAYBE SHE DOESN'T WANT ANYBODY ELSE TO, EITHER.
THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO LEAVE HER ALONE FOR A WHILE.
...
...OH.
IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?
BLURRY
IF I GET MY HEART BROKEN,
WILL HARU GET MAD LIKE HE DID YESTERDAY?
IF YOU DON'T SET YOUR HEART ON SOMETHING,
THEN IT WON'T BREAK IF THAT THING IS LOST.
BUT
...I GUESS IT'S DIFFERENT.
WHEN MY HEART BREAKS,
HARU WON'T BE THERE FOR ME.

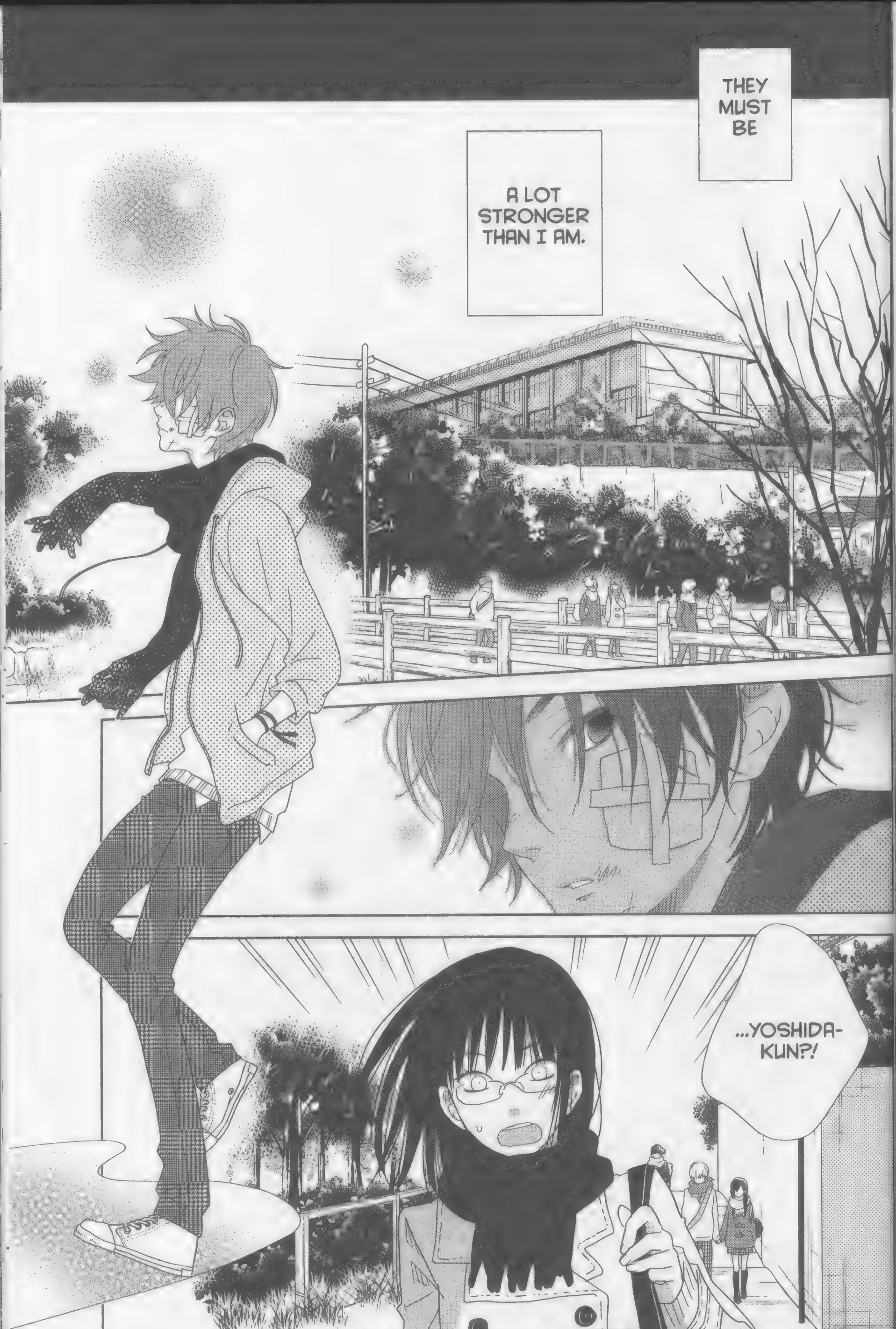

IF YOU KEEP THIS UP,
IT'S GONNA BE KIND OF HARD ON ME.
NO FAIR.
WHEN YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT,
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU.
MITTY HAS HARU-KUN.
AND HARU-KUN HAS MITTY.
MILK
ワクワク楽しい
FUN AND EXCITING DOLPHIN SHOW
MUST BE NICE.
I'M JEALOUS.
THEY'RE SO LUCKY.
WHEN.
WHEN
WILL IT BE MY TURN?
SO WHAT ABOUT ME?
...NATSUME-SAN?

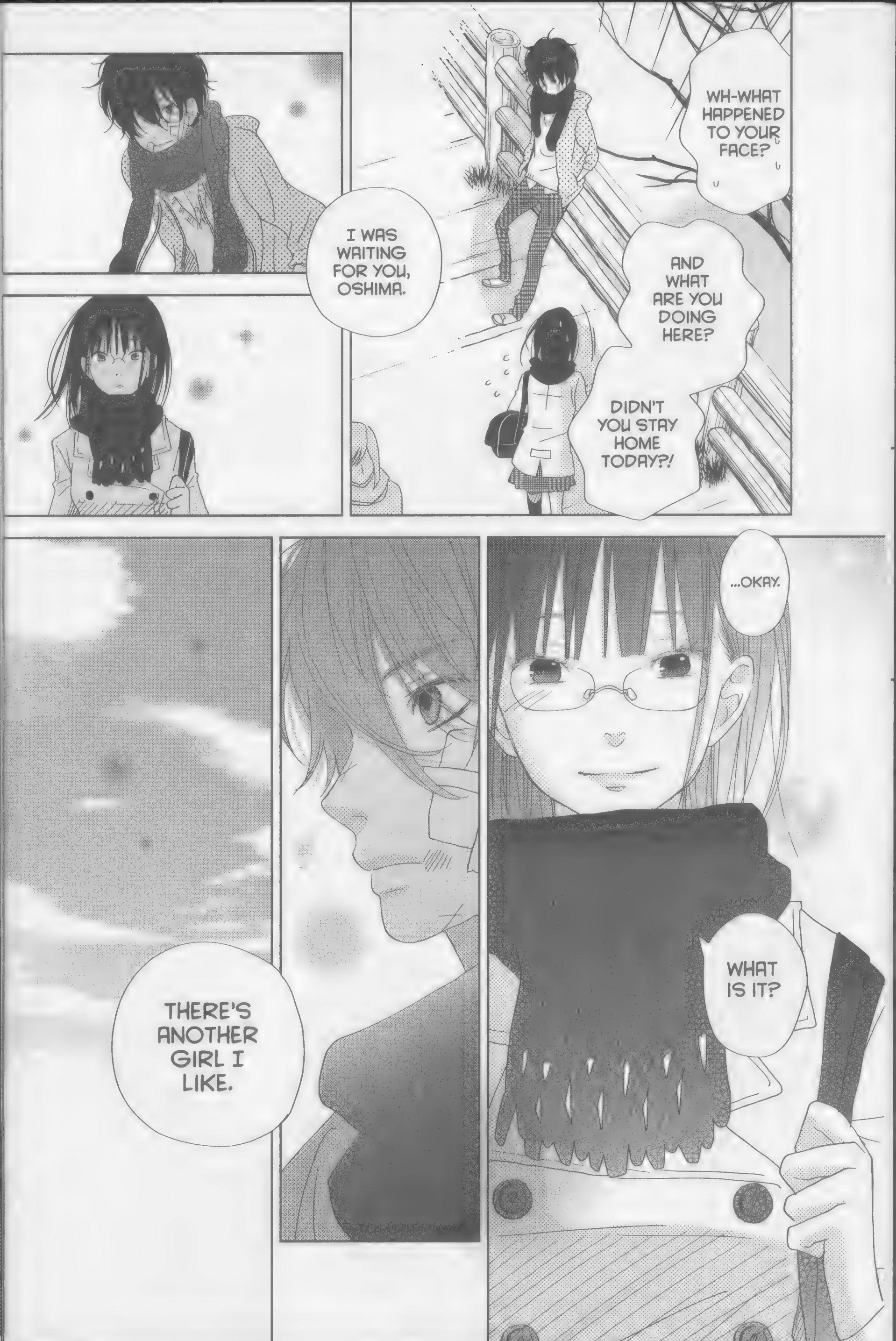

GASP
はっ
NATSUME-SAN, ARE YOU LISTENING?
UH, YEAH, SORRY.
XAVIER-SAN COMES TO JAPAN, RIGHT.
UM... WHAT?
...
NATSUME-SAN, I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU'RE FEELING.
BUT LET'S FORGET ABOUT THE HEART-BREAK FOR A SECOND,
AND FOCUS ON OUR STUDIES.
SHOONK
ゴスッ
HEART-BREAK
HOW...HOW DID YOU KNOW? OH...RIGHT. MITCHAN-SAN MUST HAVE TOLD YOU.
SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY.
OH, YOU WERE RIGHT, MITTY. I NEED TO REIN IT IN SO I DON'T CAUSE PROBLEMS...
FOR...
DAAH
!!
WAAAH! NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT! I'M SORRY!
I... I'M SORRY.
PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!!

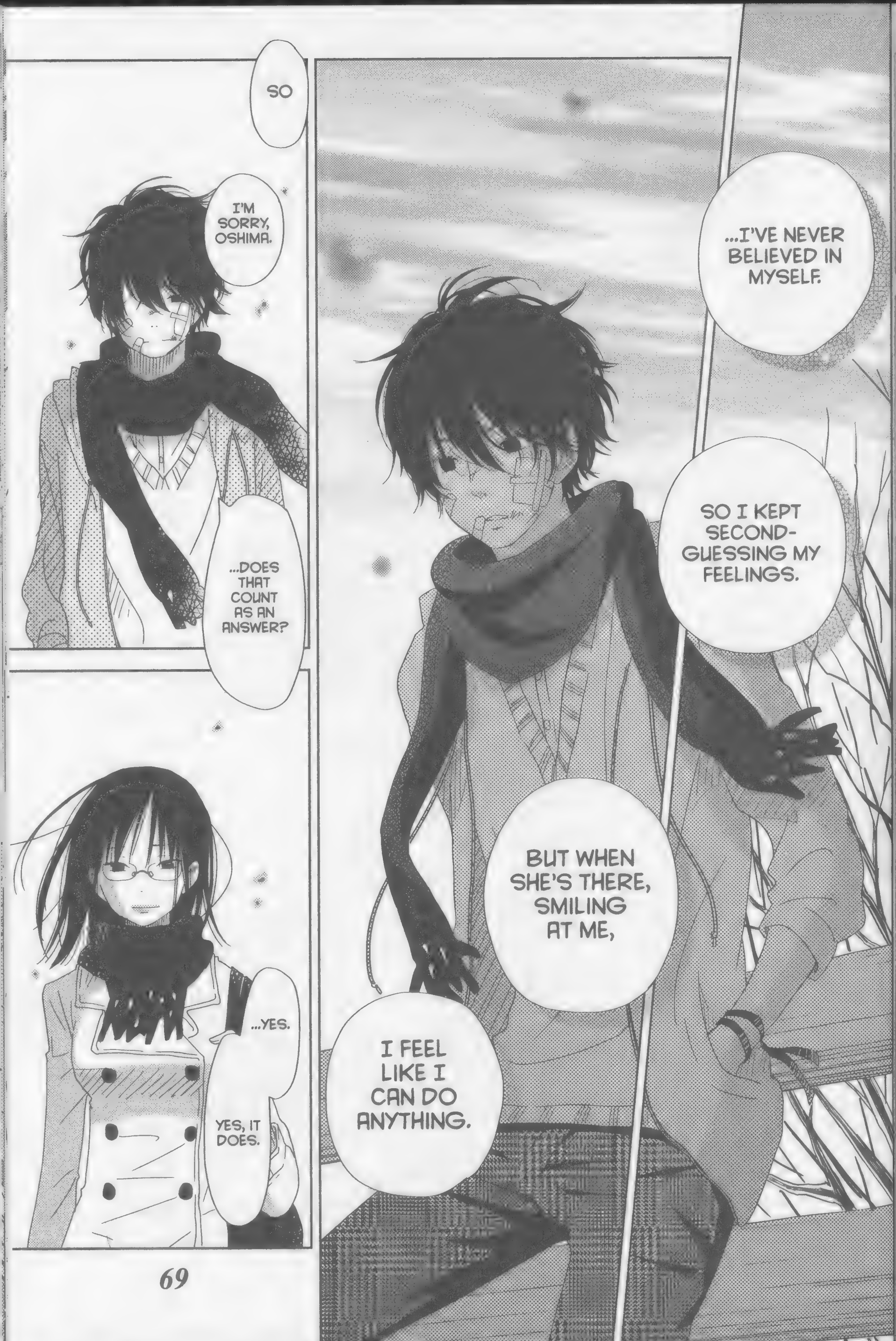

THIS IS NORMAL FOR ME.
SERI-OUSLY.
I NEVER REALIZE ANYTHING'S WRONG UNTIL I LOSE SOMEONE.
WHEN THIS HAPPENS, I JUST NEED TO KEEP TO MYSELF AT HOME FOR A WHILE. I'LL BE FINE, REALLY.
IT'S JUST THAT THIS TIME
IT WAS MITCHAN-SAN... THAT'S ALL.
HAS SHE FELT LIKE THIS BEFORE?
SHE'S JUST KEPT IT TO HERSELF ALL THIS TIME.
DOES SHE
KEEP GETTING HURT LIKE THIS?
OVER AND OVER AGAIN?
WHY DOES THIS...
...ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?

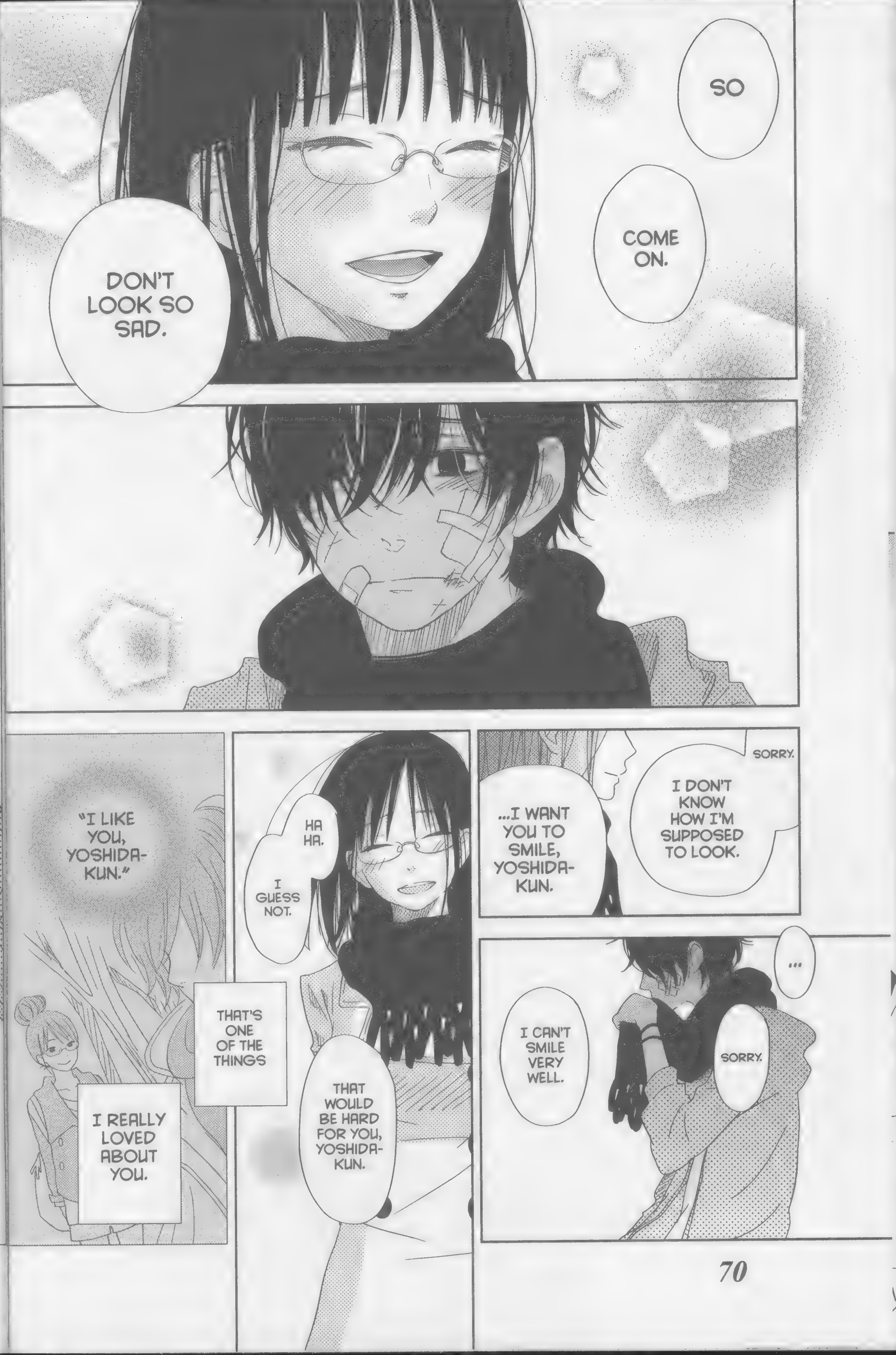

...DON'T CRY.
IF SOMEONE
PULLED OUT A CHAIR FOR ME...
......!

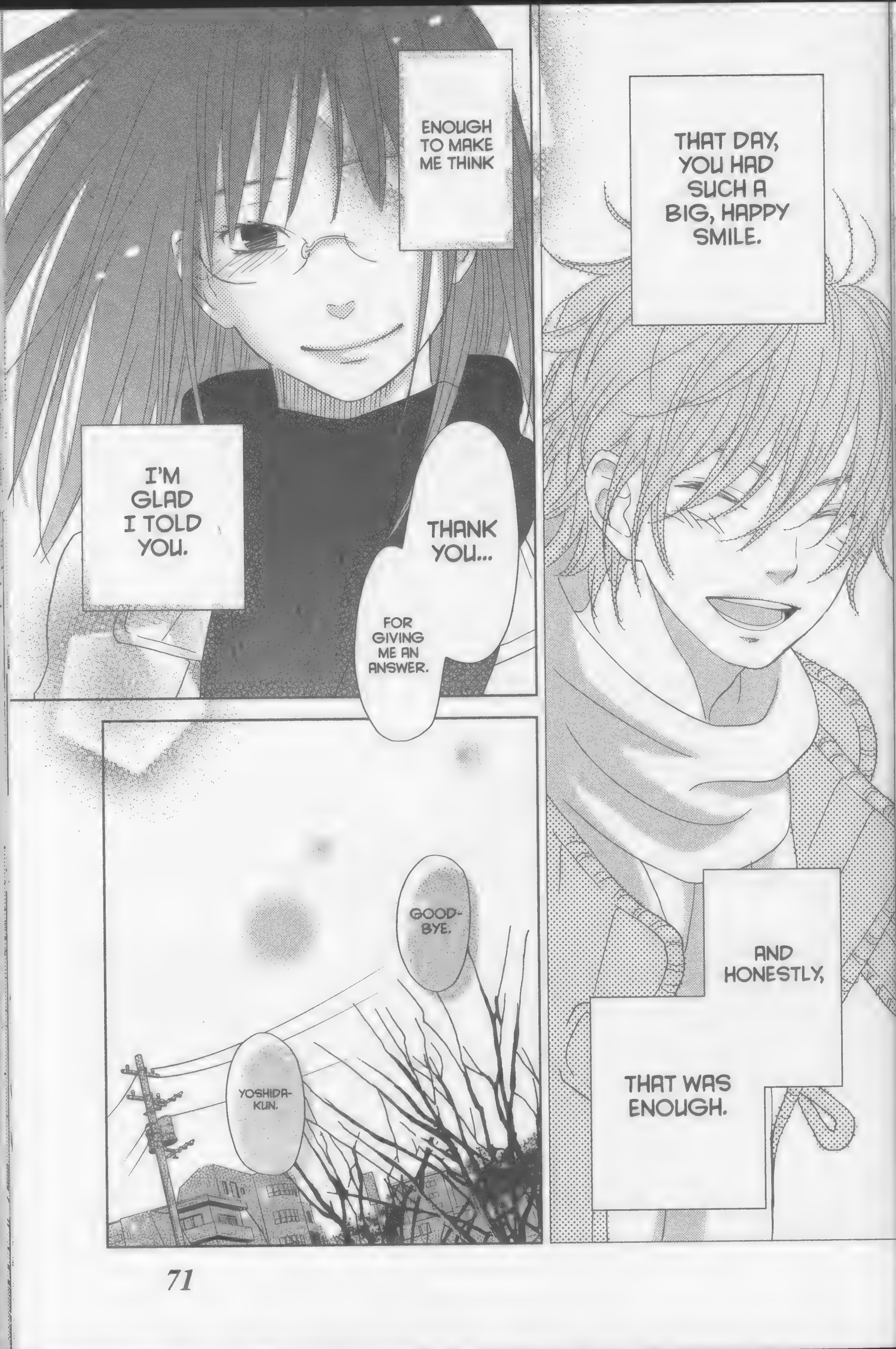

AND THEY ALL STILL
SET THEIR HEARTS ON HAVING SOMEONE ELSE.
HARU AND NATSUME-SAN BOTH.
OFFLINE GROUP JUMP ROPE
DESPITE HAVING LOST SO MANY "SOMEONE ELSE'S"...

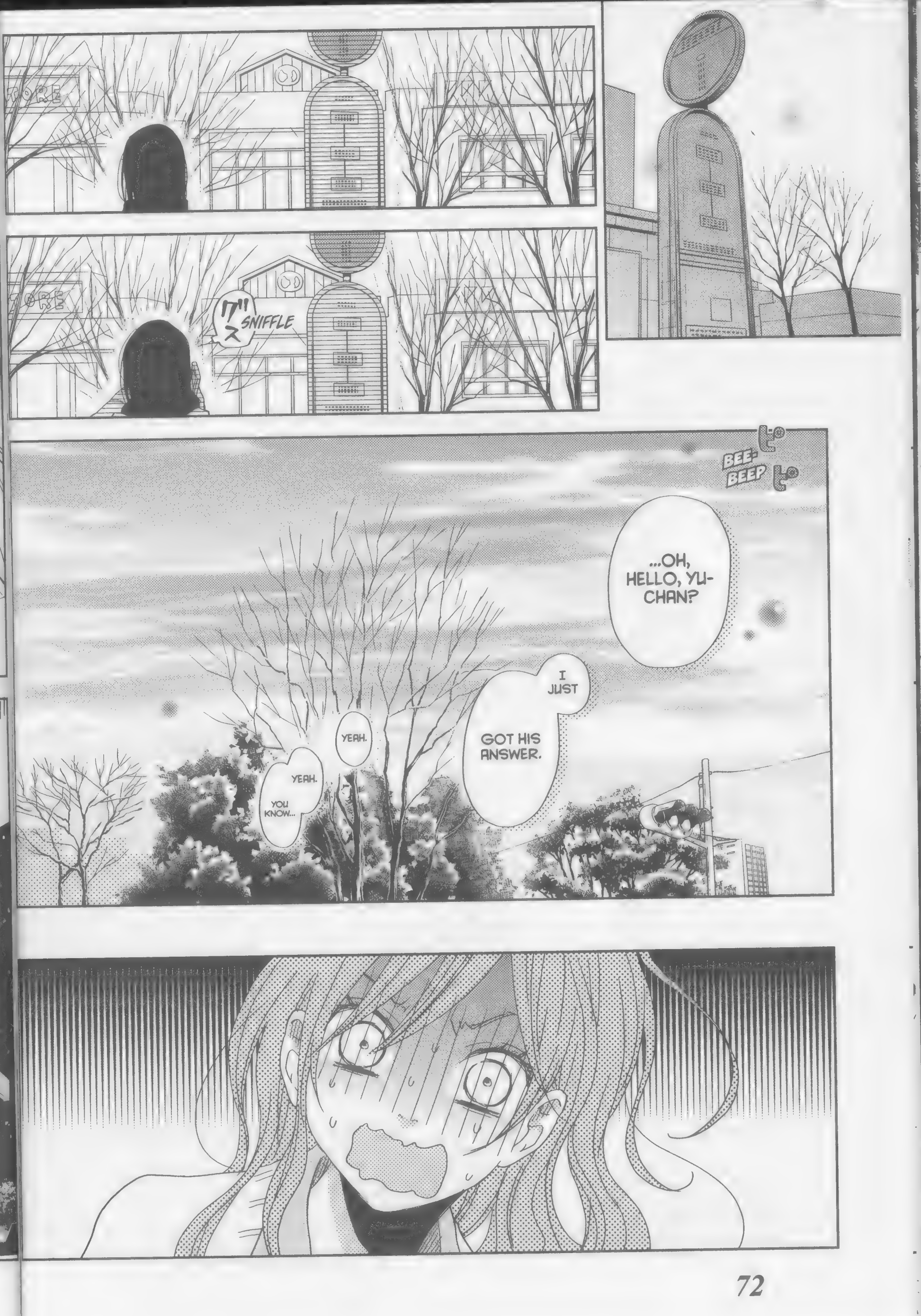

THEY MUST BE
A LOT STRONGER THAN I AM.
...YOSHIDA-KUN?!

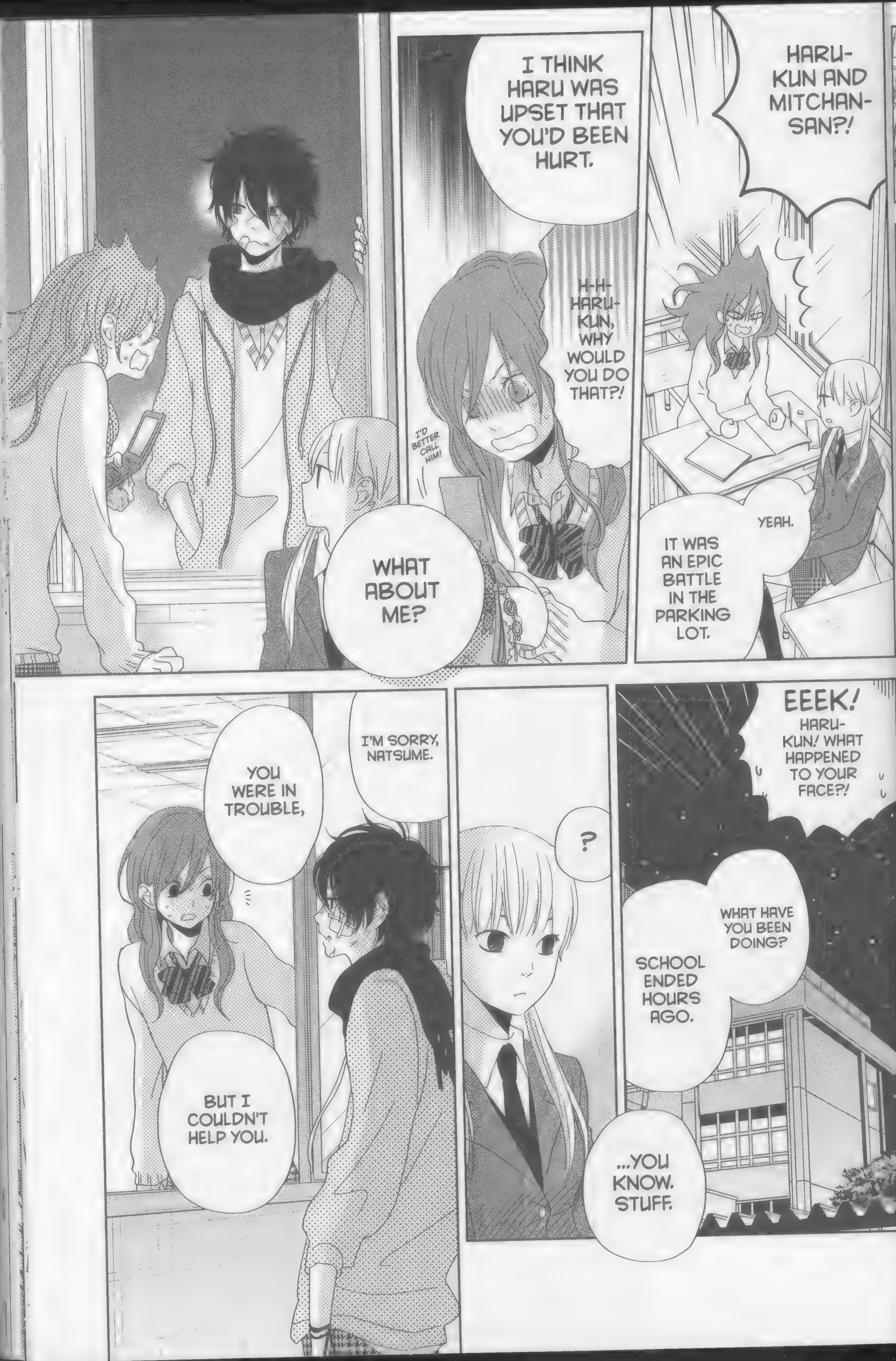

WH-WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DIDN'T YOU STAY HOME TODAY?!
I WAS WAITING FOR YOU, OSHIMA.
...OKAY.
WHAT IS IT?
THERE'S ANOTHER GIRL I LIKE.

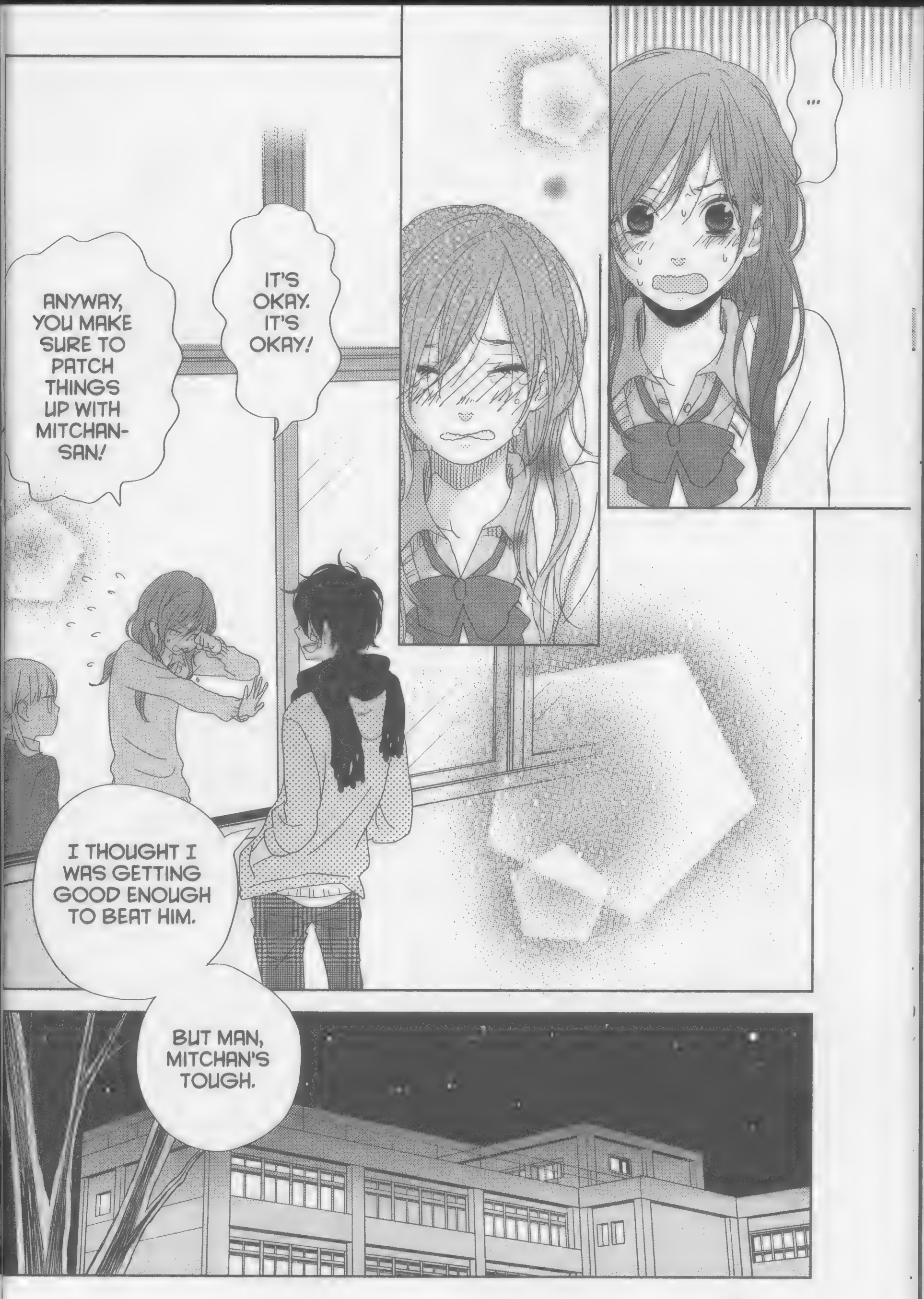

...I'VE NEVER BELIEVED IN MYSELF.
SO I KEPT SECOND-GUESSING MY FEELINGS.
BUT WHEN SHE'S THERE, SMILING AT ME,
I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO ANYTHING.
SO
I'M SORRY, OSHIMA.
...DOES THAT COUNT AS AN ANSWER?
...YES.
YES, IT DOES.

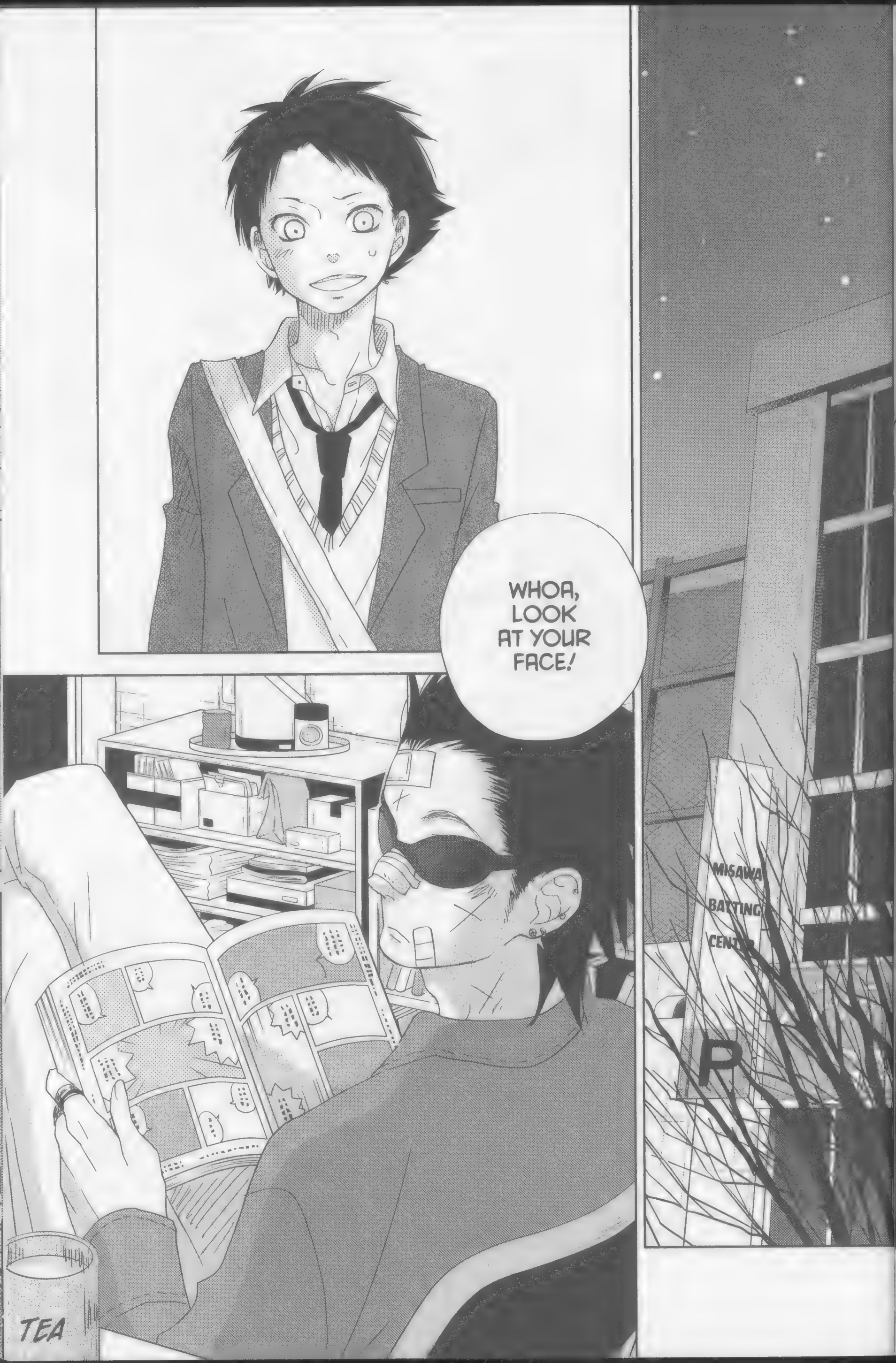

SO
COME ON.
DON'T LOOK SO SAD.
SORRY.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO LOOK.
...I WANT YOU TO SMILE, YOSHIDA-KUN.
HA HA.
I GUESS NOT.
THAT WOULD BE HARD FOR YOU, YOSHIDA-KUN.
...
SORRY.
I CAN'T SMILE VERY WELL.
THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS
I REALLY LOVED ABOUT YOU.
"I LIKE YOU, YOSHIDA-KUN."

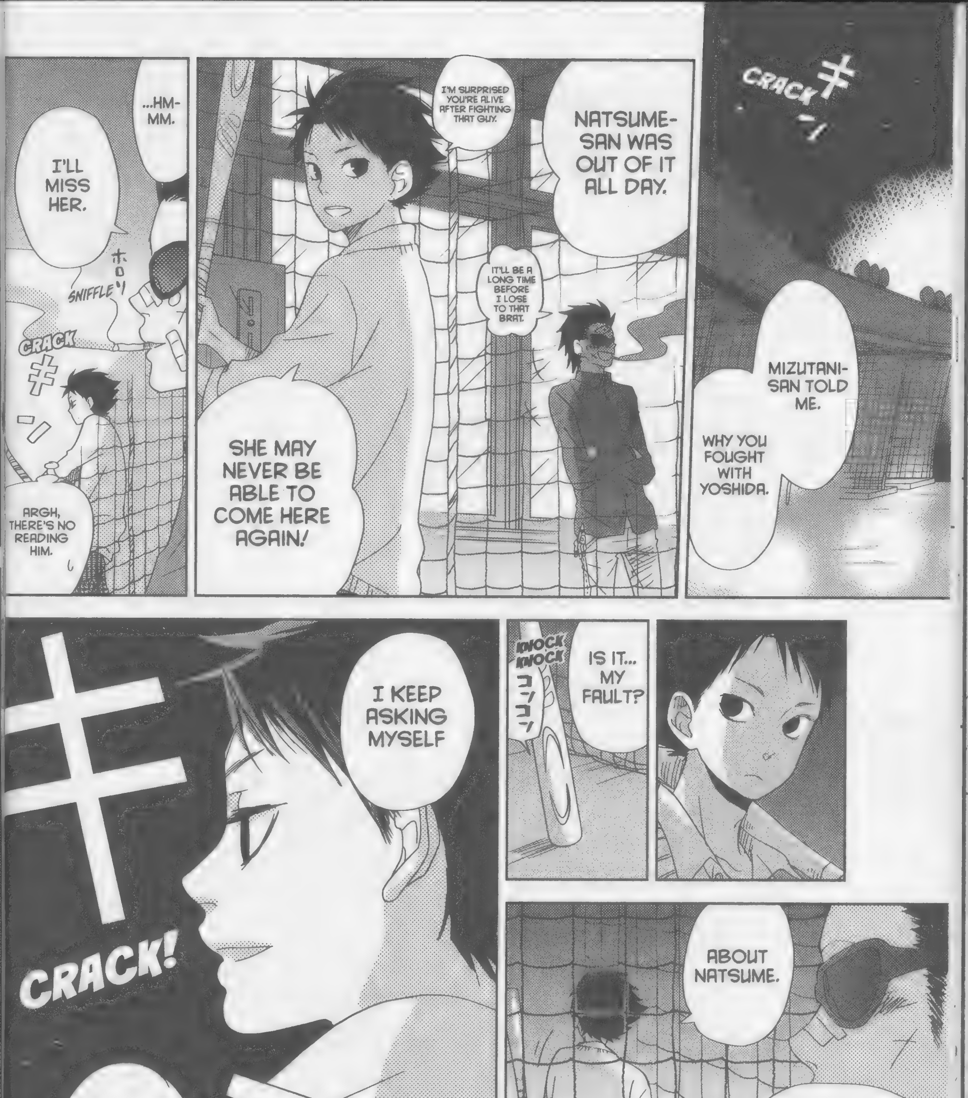

THAT DAY, YOU HAD SUCH A BIG, HAPPY SMILE.
AND HONESTLY,
THAT WAS ENOUGH.
ENOUGH TO MAKE ME THINK
I'M GLAD I TOLD YOU.
THANK YOU...
FOR GIVING ME AN ANSWER.
GOOD-BYE.
YOSHIDA-KUN.

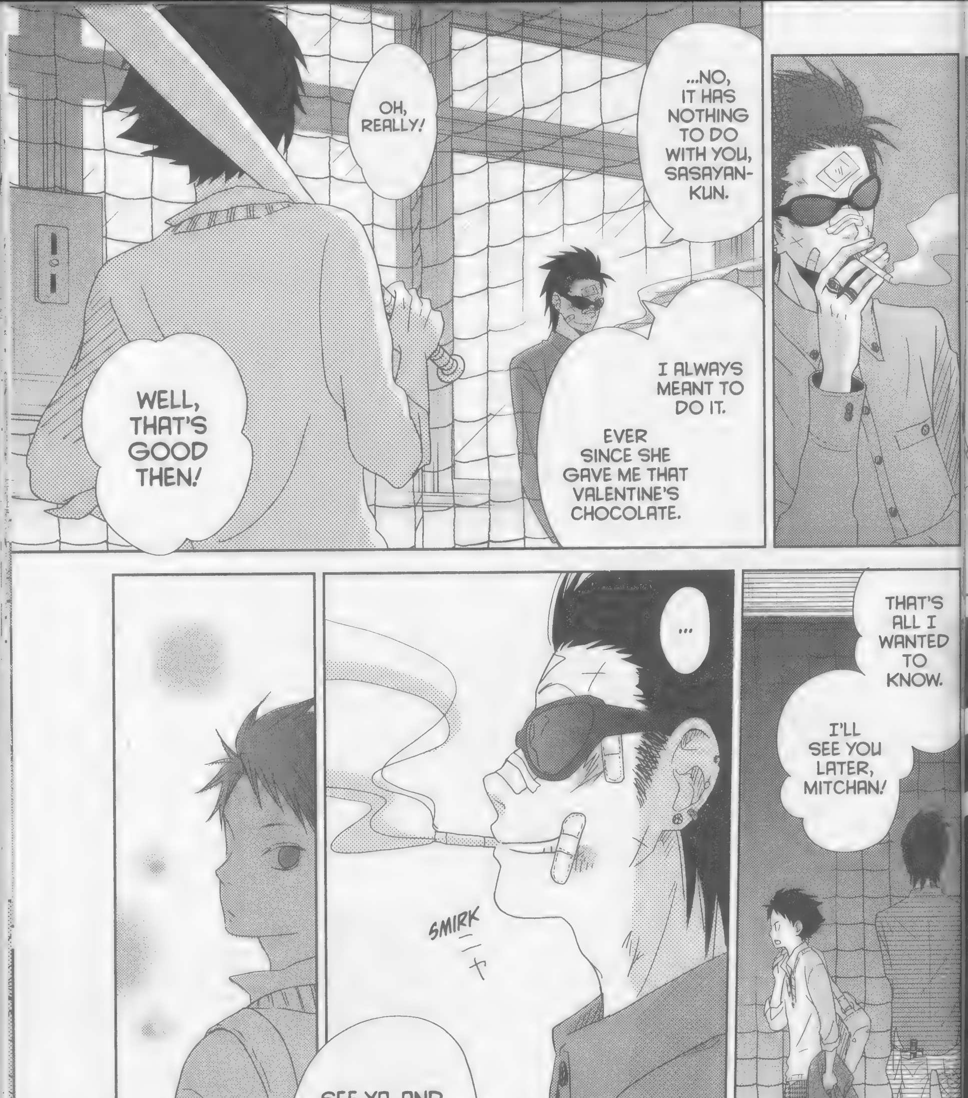

グズ SNIFFLE
BEE-BEEP
...OH, HELLO, YU-CHAN?
I JUST GOT HIS ANSWER.
YEAH.
YEAH.
YOU KNOW...

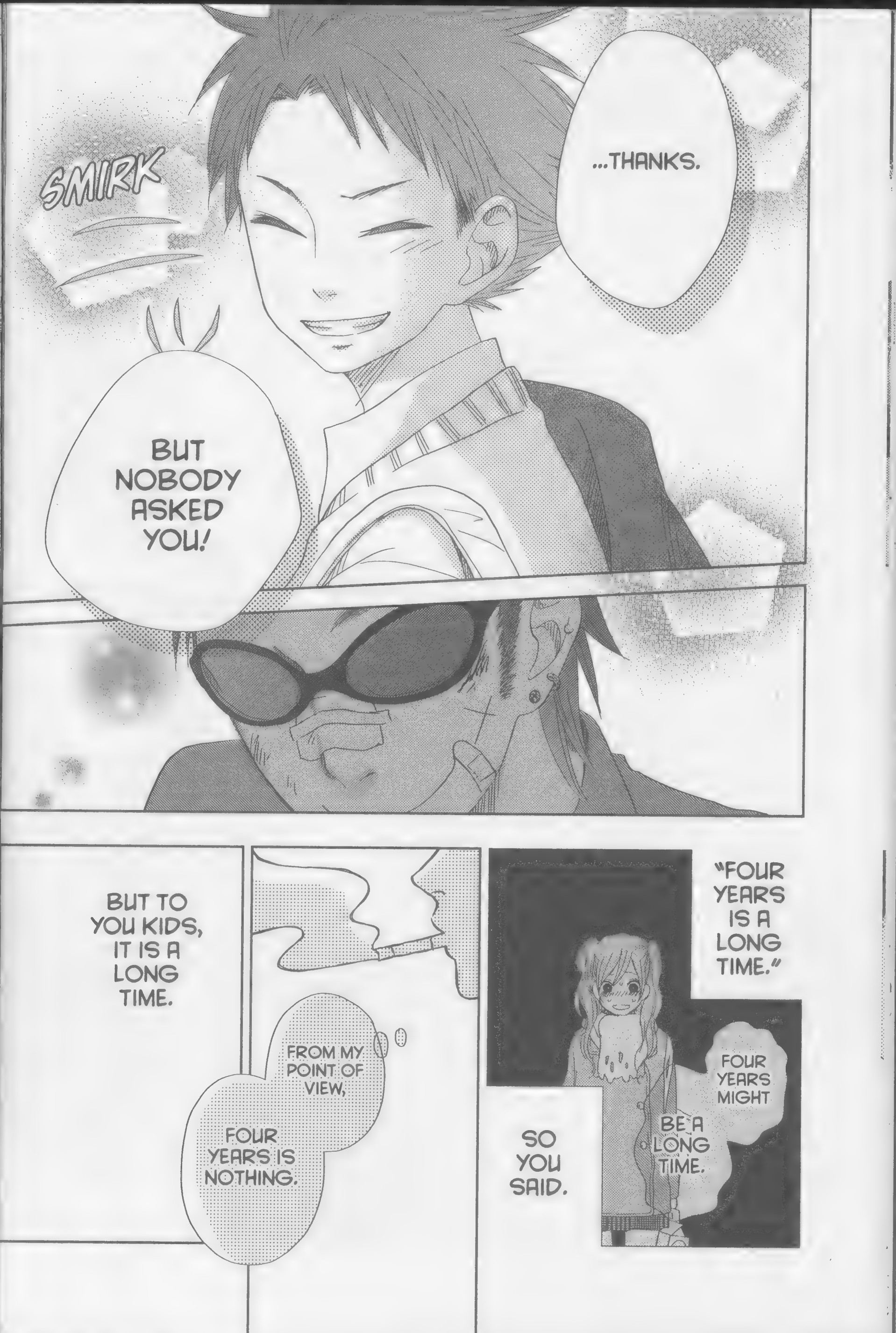

HARU-KUN AND MITCHAN-SAN?!
YEAH.
IT WAS AN EPIC BATTLE IN THE PARKING LOT.
I THINK HARU WAS UPSET THAT YOU'D BEEN HURT.
H-H-HARU-KUN, WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?!
I'D BETTER CALL HIM!
WHAT ABOUT ME?
EEEK! HARU-KUN! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?!
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?
SCHOOL ENDED HOURS AGO.
...YOU KNOW. STUFF.
?
I'M SORRY, NATSUME.
YOU WERE IN TROUBLE,
BUT I COULDN'T HELP YOU.

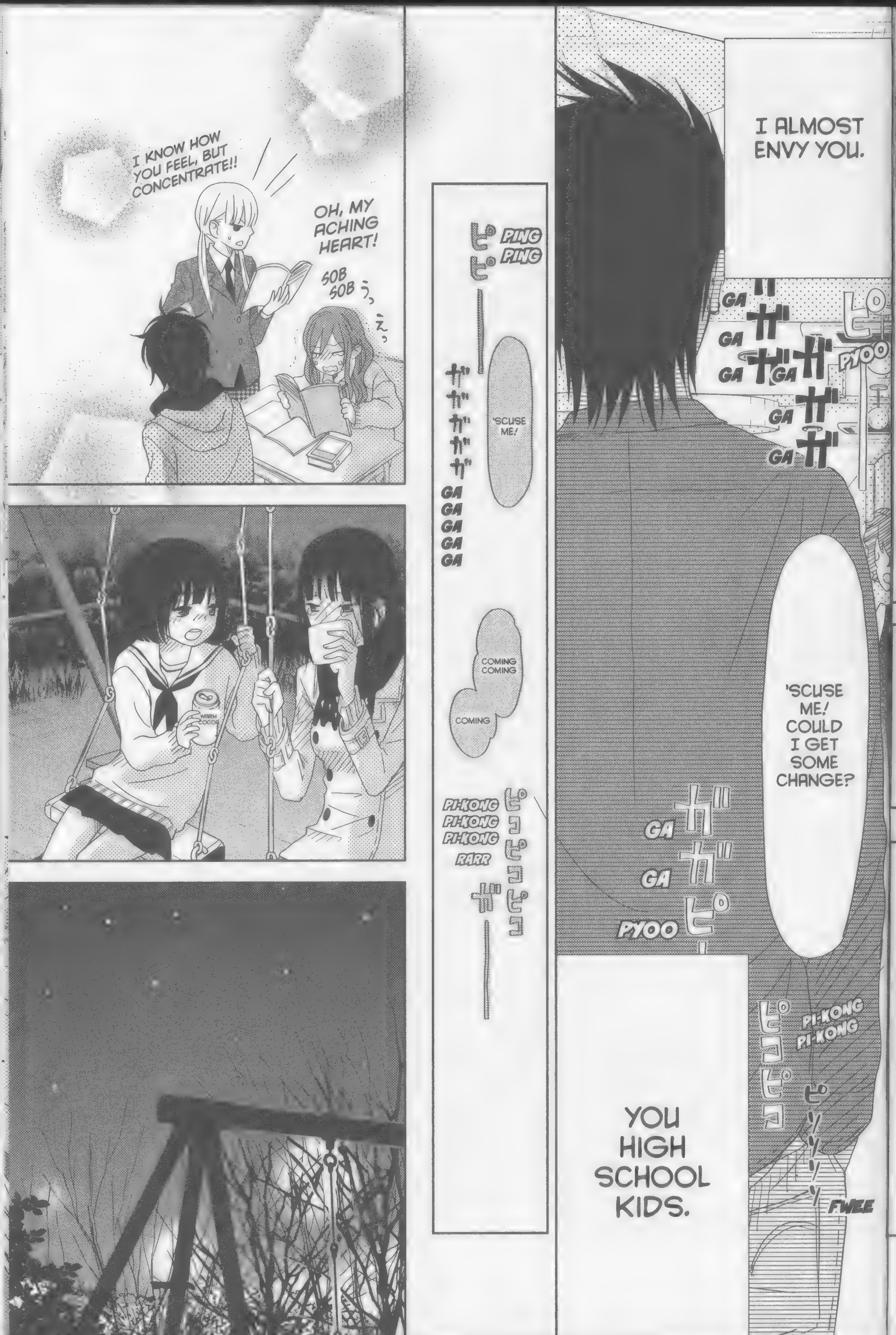

...
IT'S OKAY. IT'S OKAY!
ANYWAY, YOU MAKE SURE TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH MITCHAN-SAN!
I THOUGHT I WAS GETTING GOOD ENOUGH TO BEAT HIM.
BUT MAN, MITCHAN'S TOUGH.

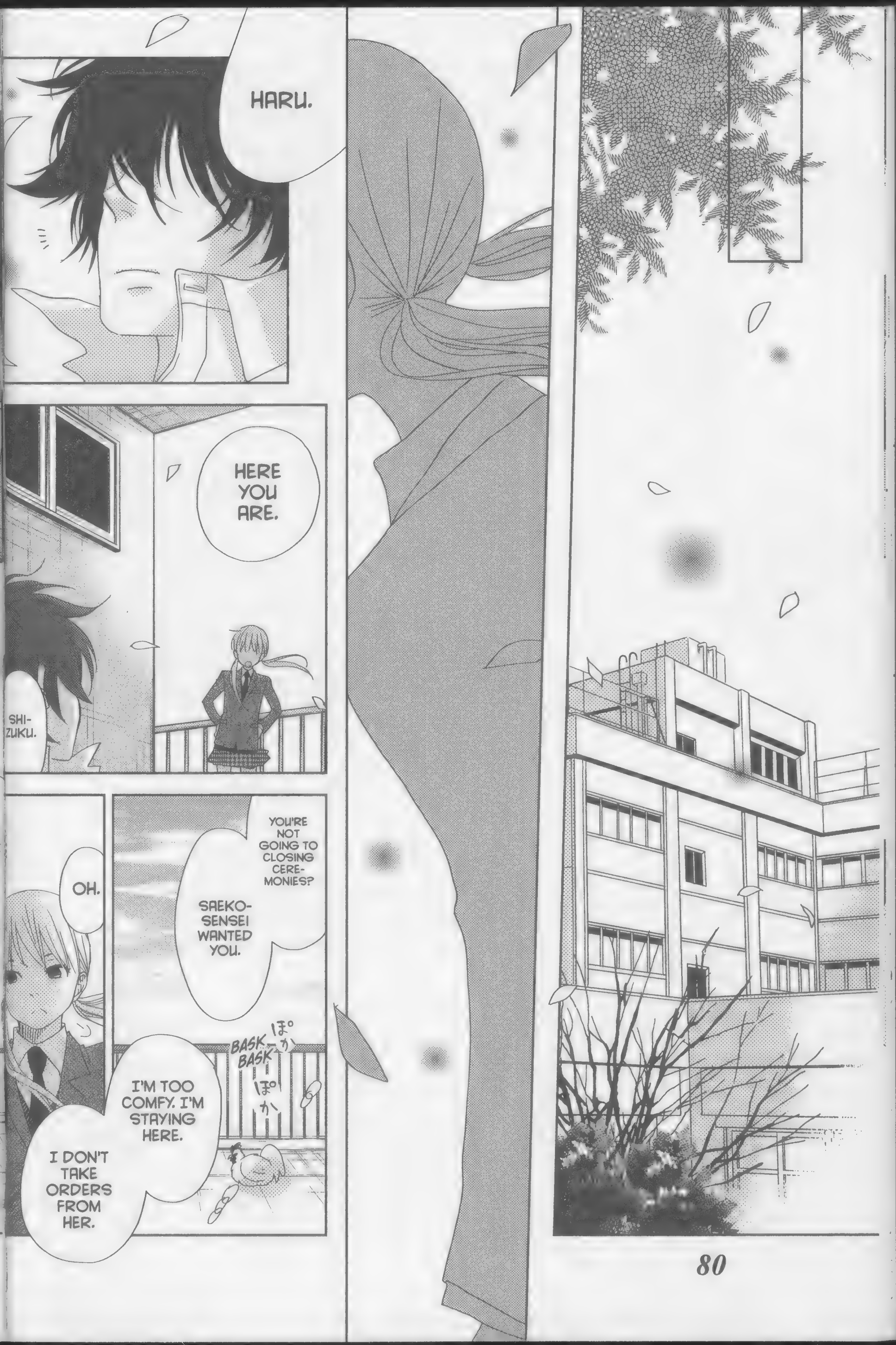

MISAWA
BATTING
CENTER
P
WHOA, LOOK AT YOUR FACE!
TEA

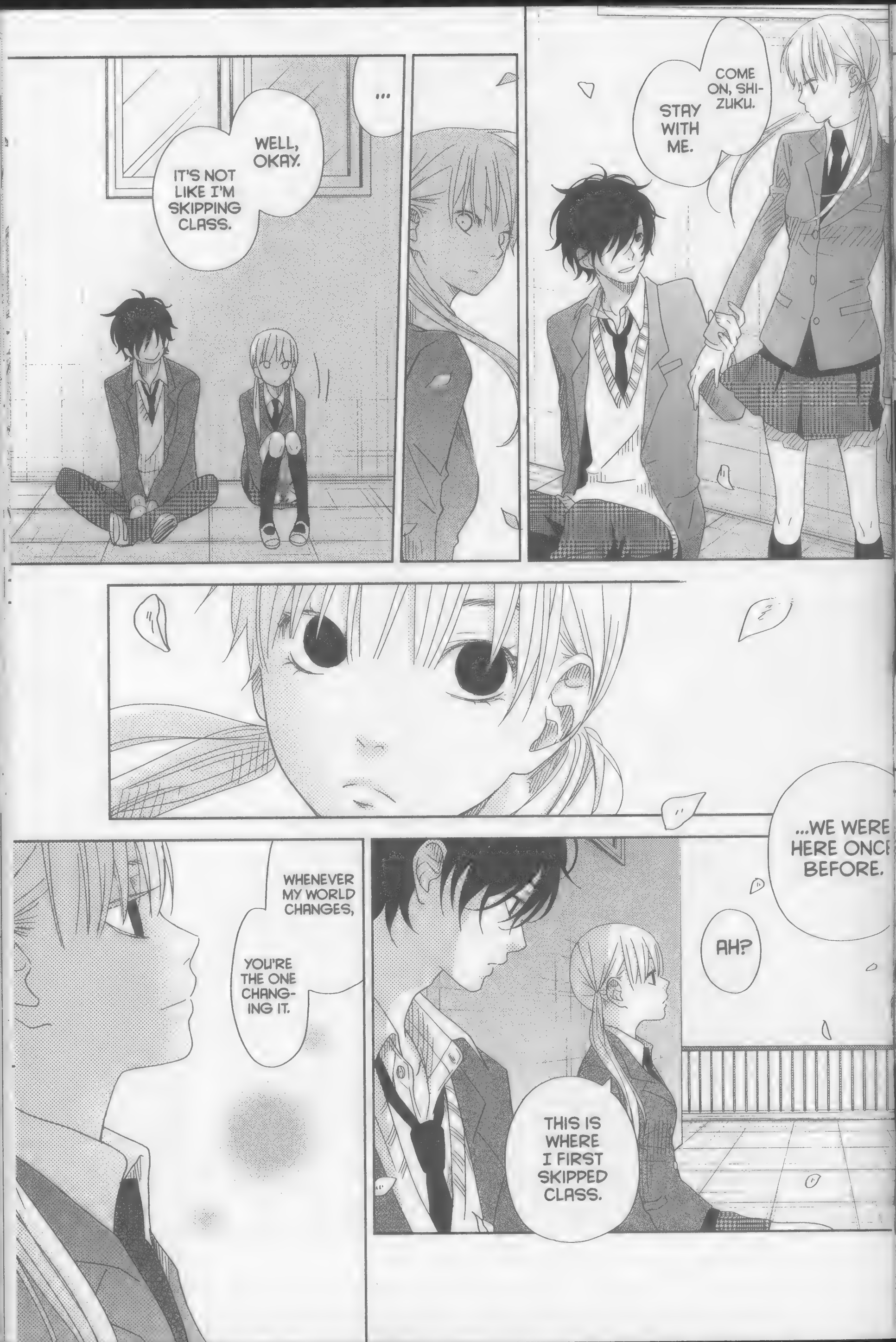

CRACK キ
MIZUTANI-SAN TOLD ME.
WHY YOU FOUGHT WITH YOSHIDA.
NATSUME-SAN WAS OUT OF IT ALL DAY.
I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE ALIVE AFTER FIGHTING THAT GUY.
IT'LL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE I LOSE TO THAT BRAT.
SHE MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO COME HERE AGAIN!
...HM-MM.
I'LL MISS HER.
SNIFFLE ホロ
CRACK キ
ARGH, THERE'S NO READING HIM.
KNOCK KNOCK コンコン
IS IT... MY FAULT?
ABOUT NATSUME.
THAT'D BE PRETTY DEPRESSING FOR ME.
BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I REALLY REGRETTED TELLING YOU TO DUMP HER.
I KEEP ASKING MYSELF
WHY WOULD I SAY THAT?
CRACK! キ

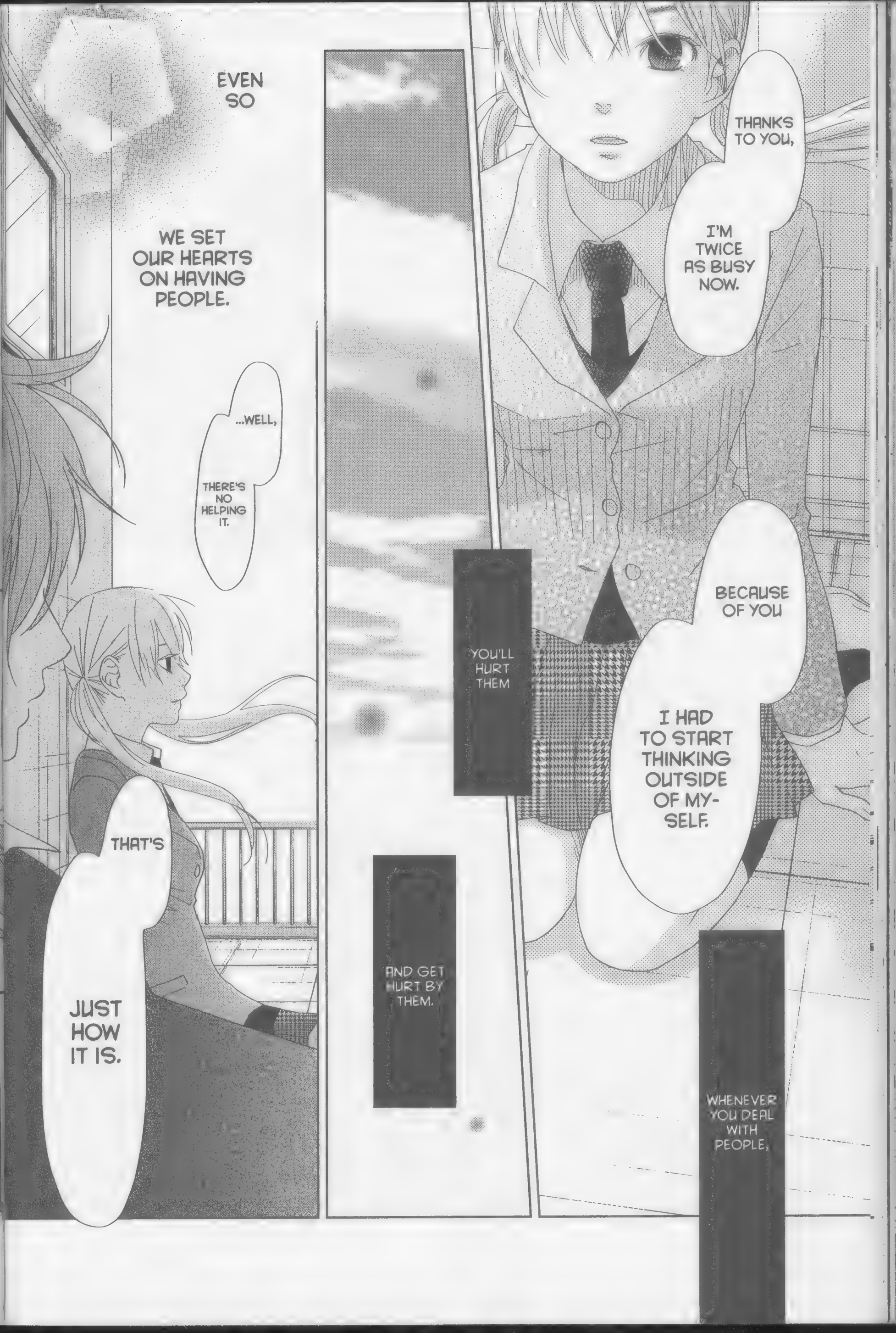

...NO, IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, SASAYAN-KUN.
I ALWAYS MEANT TO DO IT.
EVER SINCE SHE GAVE ME THAT VALENTINE'S CHOCOLATE.
OH, REALLY!
WELL, THAT'S GOOD THEN!
THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO KNOW.
I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MITCHAN!
...
SMIRK ニヤ
SEE YA. AND GOOD LUCK, SASAYAN-KUN.

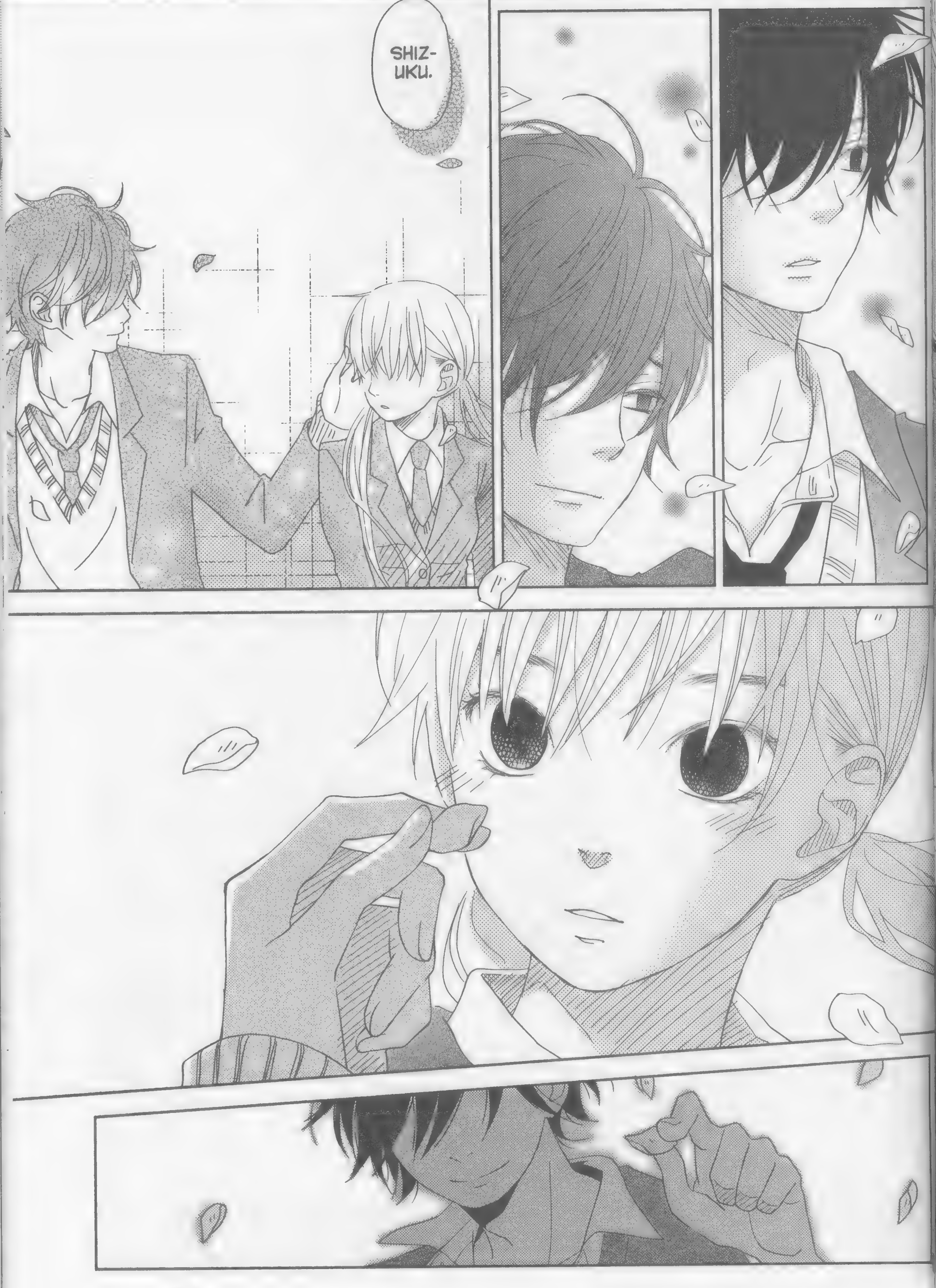

...THANKS.
SMIRK
BUT NOBODY ASKED YOU!
"FOUR YEARS IS A LONG TIME."
FOUR YEARS MIGHT BE A LONG TIME.
SO YOU SAID.
FROM MY POINT OF VIEW,
FOUR YEARS IS NOTHING.
BUT TO YOU KIDS, IT IS A LONG TIME.

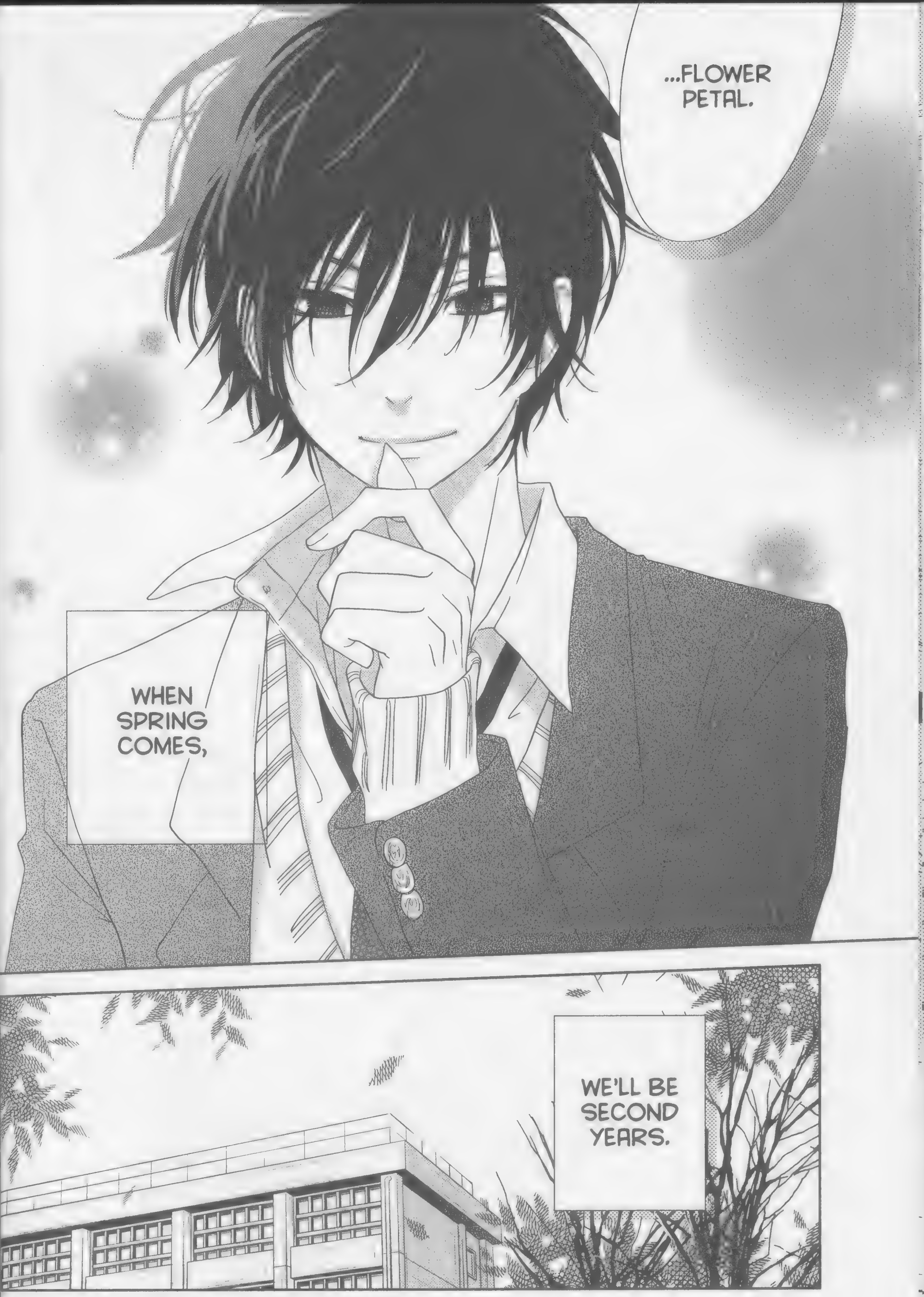

I ALMOST ENVY YOU.
GA GA GA GA GA GA
PYOO
'SCUSE ME! COULD I GET SOME CHANGE?
GA GA PYOO
PI-KONG PI-KONG
FWEE
YOU HIGH SCHOOL KIDS.
PING PING
'SCUSE ME!
GA GA GA GA GA
COMING COMING
COMING
PI-KONG PI-KONG PI-KONG RARR
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, BUT CONCENTRATE!!
OH, MY ACHING HEART!
SOB SOB
WARM COCOA


HARU.
HERE YOU ARE.
SHI-ZUKU.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CLOSING CERE-MONIES?
SAEKO-SENSEI WANTED YOU.
OH.
BASK BASK
ぽかぽか
I'M TOO COMFY. I'M STAYING HERE.
I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM HER.

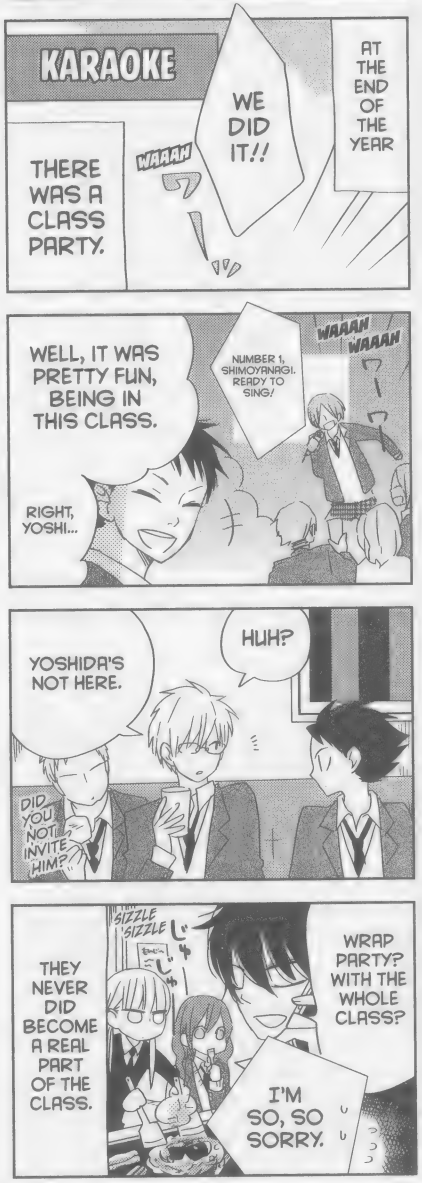

COME ON, SHI-ZUKU.
STAY WITH ME.
...
WELL, OKAY.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M SKIPPING CLASS.
...WE WERE HERE ONCE BEFORE.
AH?
THIS IS WHERE I FIRST SKIPPED CLASS.
WHENEVER MY WORLD CHANGES,
YOU'RE THE ONE CHANG-ING IT.


THANKS TO YOU,
I'M TWICE AS BUSY NOW.
BECAUSE OF YOU
I HAD TO START THINKING OUTSIDE OF MYSELF.
WHENEVER YOU DEAL WITH PEOPLE,
YOU'LL HURT THEM
AND GET HURT BY THEM.
THAT'S
JUST HOW IT IS.
...WELL,
THERE'S NO HELPING IT.
EVEN SO
WE SET OUR HEARTS ON HAVING PEOPLE.

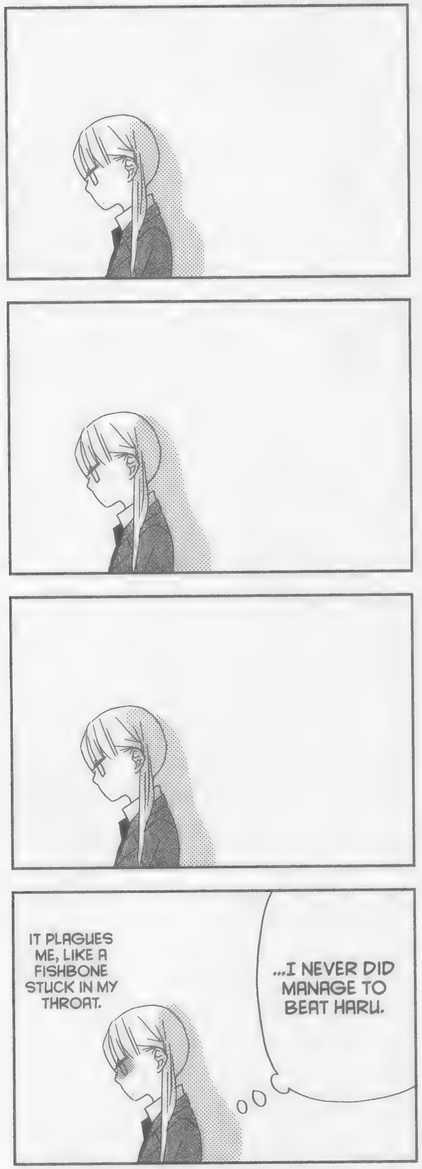

SHIZUKU.


...FLOWER PETAL.
WHEN SPRING COMES,
WE'LL BE SECOND YEARS.

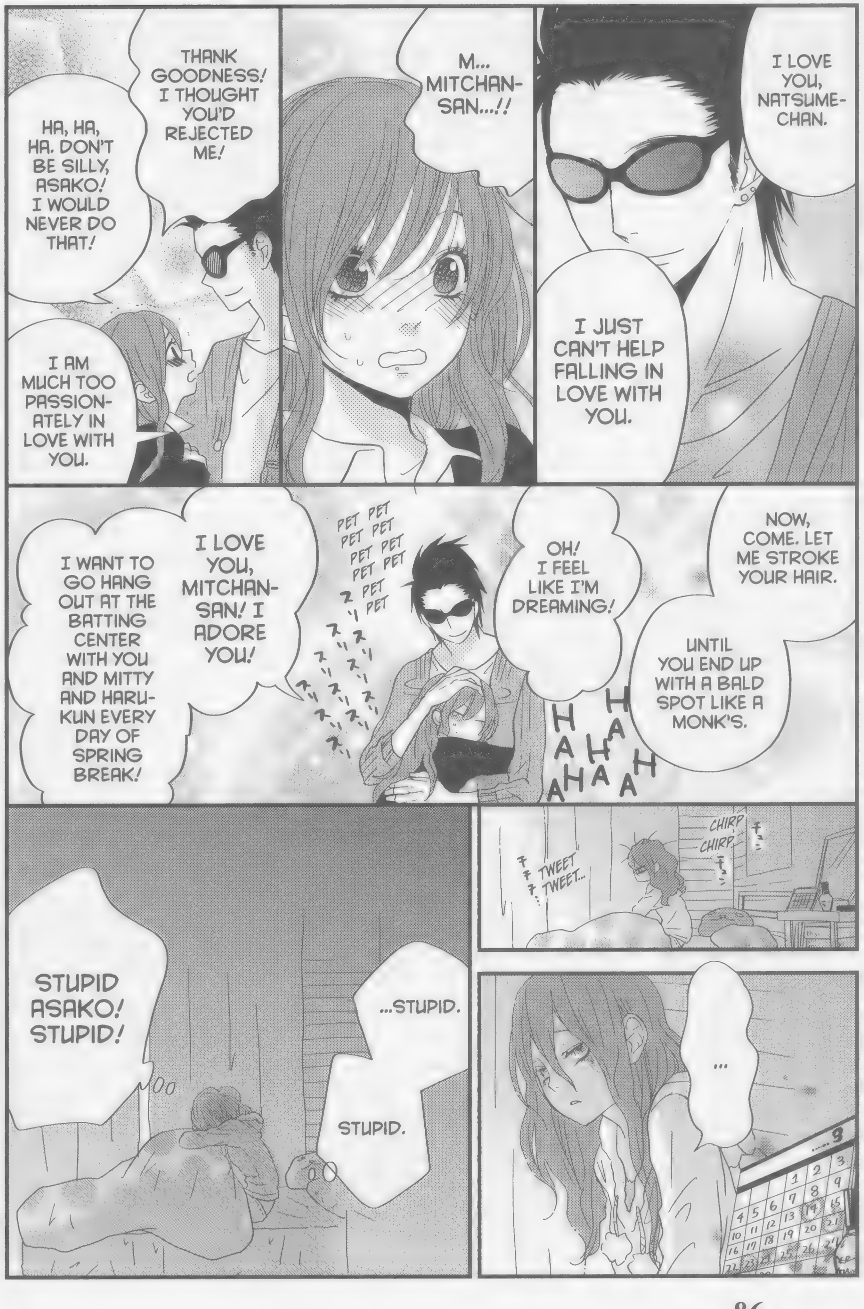
WRAP PARTY

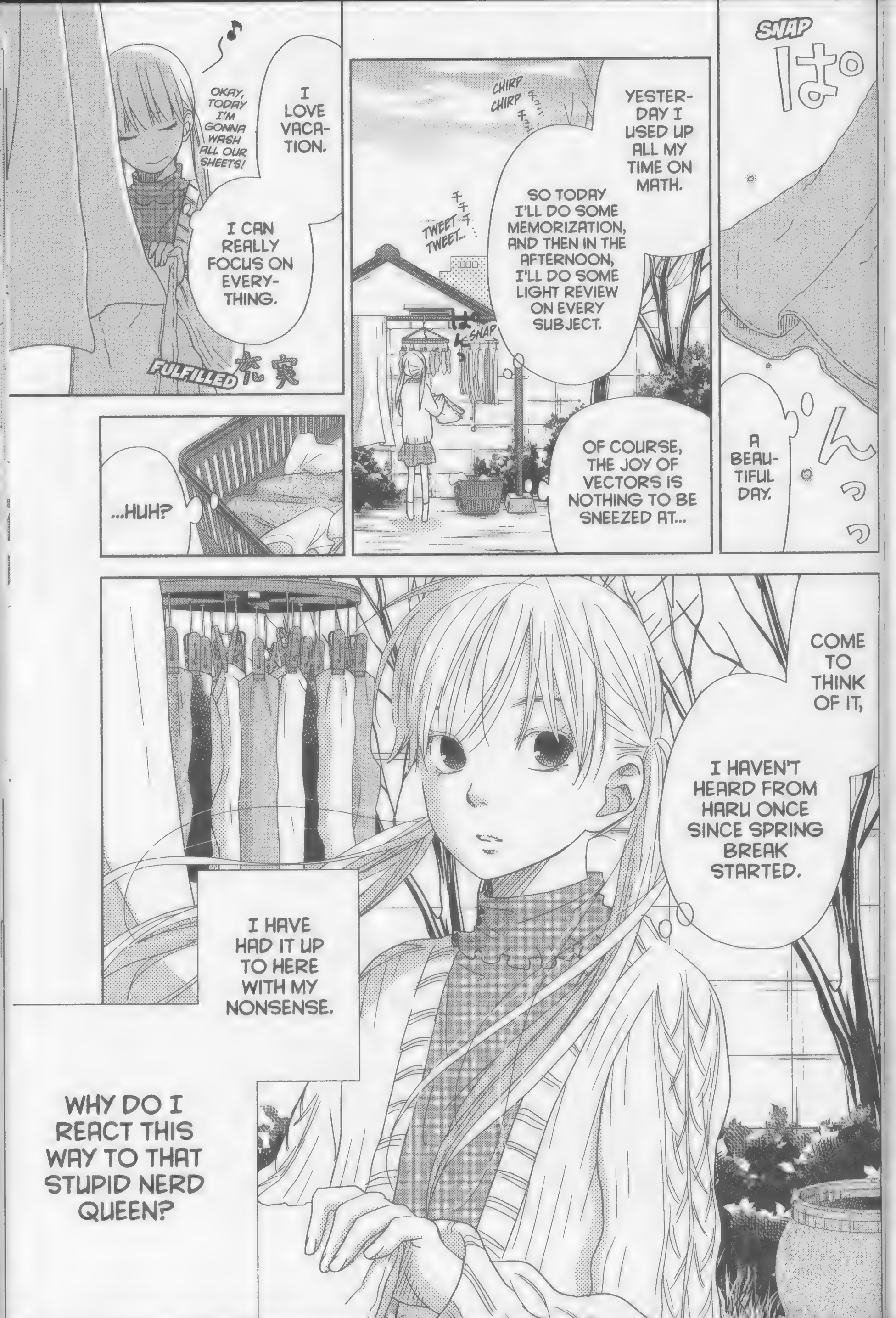

AT THE END OF THE YEAR
WE DID IT!!
WAAAH
THERE WAS A CLASS PARTY.
KARAOKE
WAAAH WAAAH
NUMBER 1, SHIMOYANAGI. READY TO SING!
WELL, IT WAS PRETTY FUN, BEING IN THIS CLASS.
RIGHT, YOSHI...
HUH?
YOSHIDA'S NOT HERE.
DID YOU NOT INVITE HIM?
WRAP PARTY? WITH THE WHOLE CLASS?
SIZZLE SIZZLE
I'M SO, SO SORRY.
THEY NEVER DID BECOME A REAL PART OF THE CLASS.

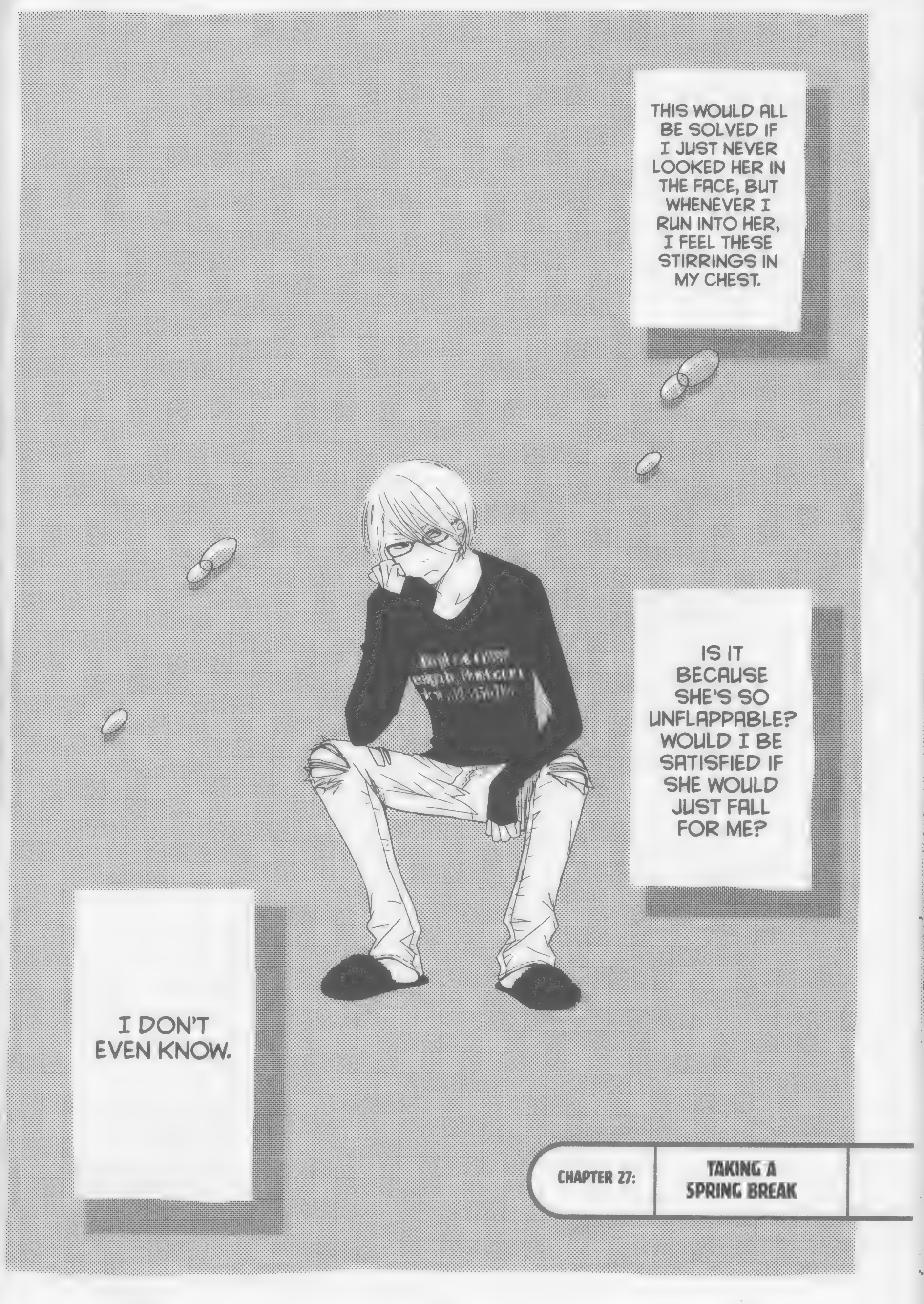
AT THE END OF FIRST YEAR


...I NEVER DID MANAGE TO BEAT HARU.
IT PLAGUES ME, LIKE A FISHBONE STUCK IN MY THROAT.

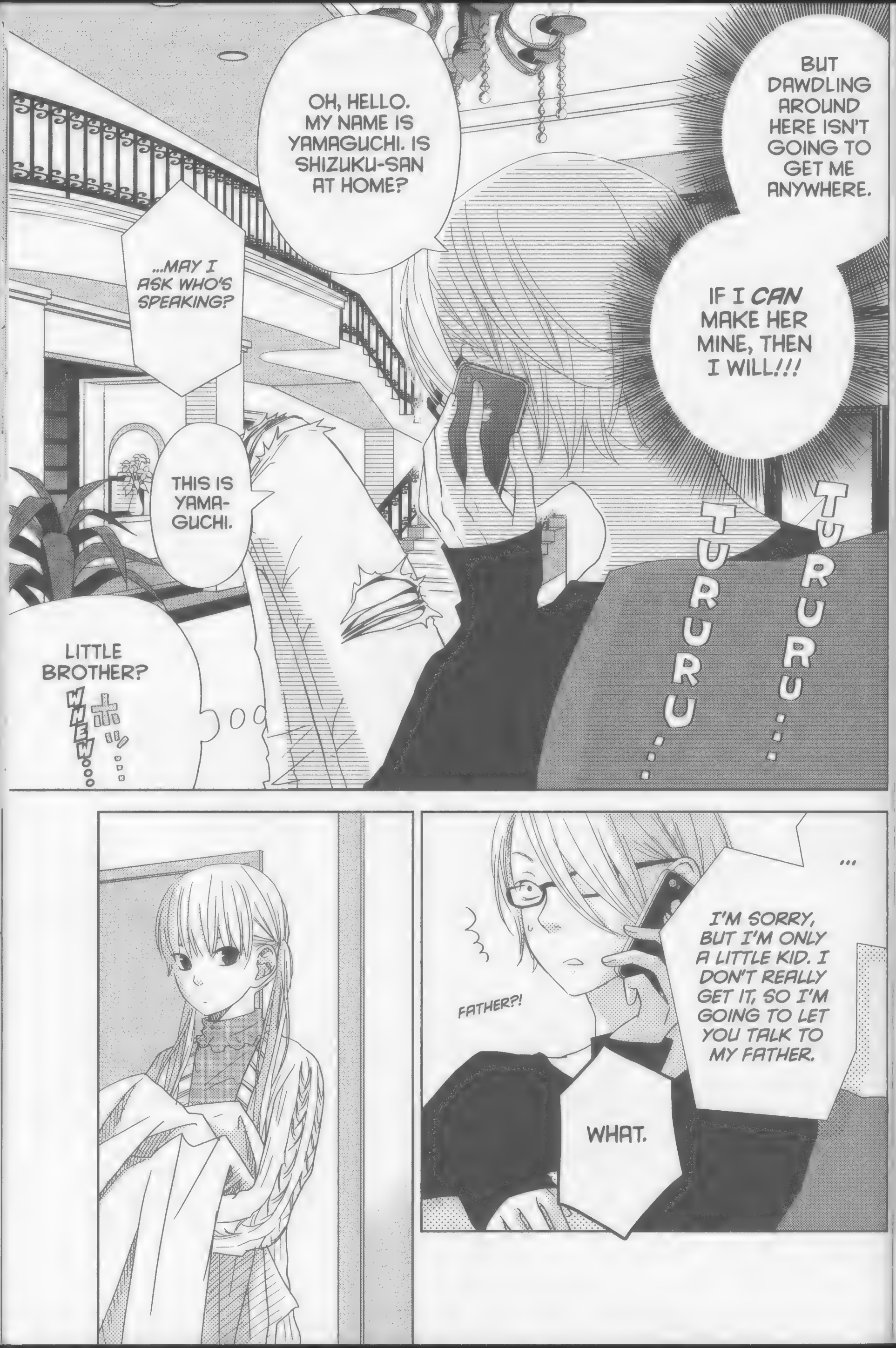
POST-CHAPTER 26 BONUS: "NATSUME'S DREAM"

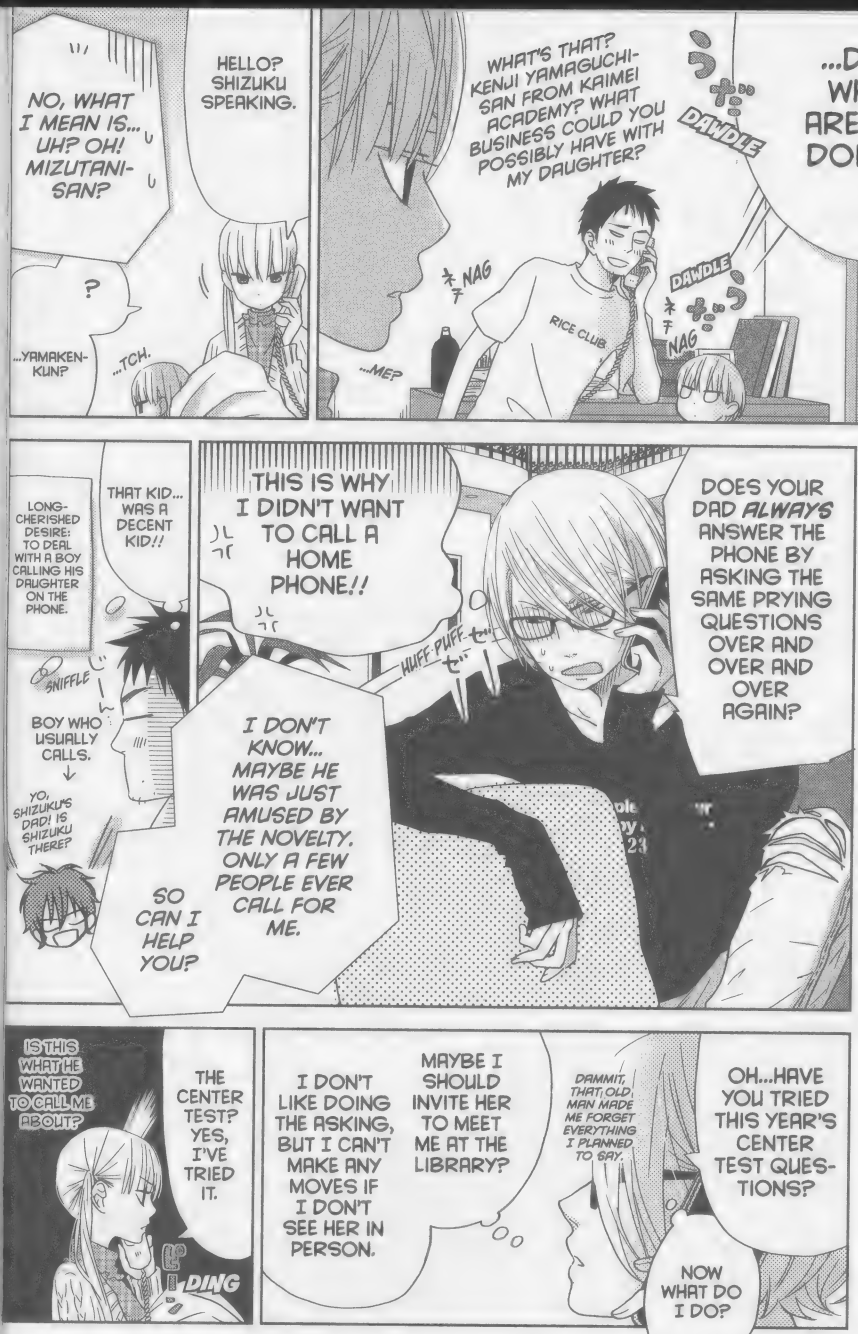

I LOVE YOU, NATSUME-CHAN.
I JUST CAN'T HELP FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOU.
M... MITCHAN-SAN...!!
THANK GOODNESS! I THOUGHT YOU'D REJECTED ME!
HA, HA, HA. DON'T BE SILLY, ASAKO! I WOULD NEVER DO THAT!
I AM MUCH TOO PASSIONATELY IN LOVE WITH YOU.
NOW, COME. LET ME STROKE YOUR HAIR.
OH! I FEEL LIKE I'M DREAMING!
UNTIL YOU END UP WITH A BALD SPOT LIKE A MONK'S.
HAHAHAHAHAHA
PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET
I LOVE YOU, MITCHAN-SAN! I ADORE YOU!
I WANT TO GO HANG OUT AT THE BATTING CENTER WITH YOU AND MITTY AND HARU-KUN EVERY DAY OF SPRING BREAK!
CHIRP CHIRP
TWEET TWEET...
...
...STUPID.
STUPID.
STUPID ASAKO! STUPID!

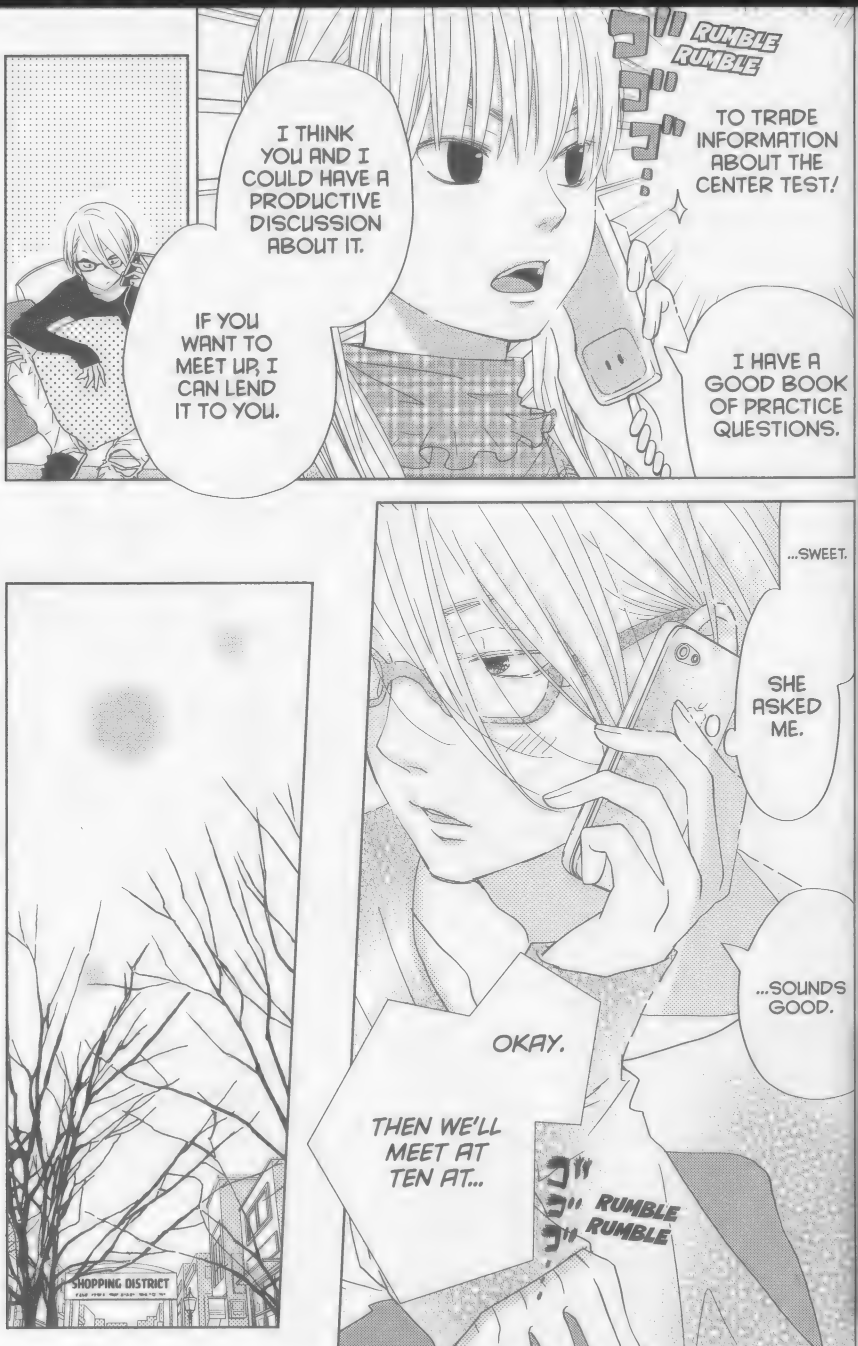

SNAP
はっ
A BEAUTIFUL DAY.
YESTERDAY I USED UP ALL MY TIME ON MATH.
CHIRP CHIRP
SO TODAY I'LL DO SOME MEMORIZATION, AND THEN IN THE AFTERNOON, I'LL DO SOME LIGHT REVIEW ON EVERY SUBJECT.
TWEET TWEET...
SNAP
OF COURSE, THE JOY OF VECTORS IS NOTHING TO BE SNEEZED AT...
I LOVE VACATION.
OKAY, TODAY I'M GONNA WASH ALL OUR SHEETS!
I CAN REALLY FOCUS ON EVERYTHING.
FULFILLED
...HUH?
COME TO THINK OF IT,
I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HARU ONCE SINCE SPRING BREAK STARTED.
I HAVE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH MY NONSENSE.
WHY DO I REACT THIS WAY TO THAT STUPID NERD QUEEN?

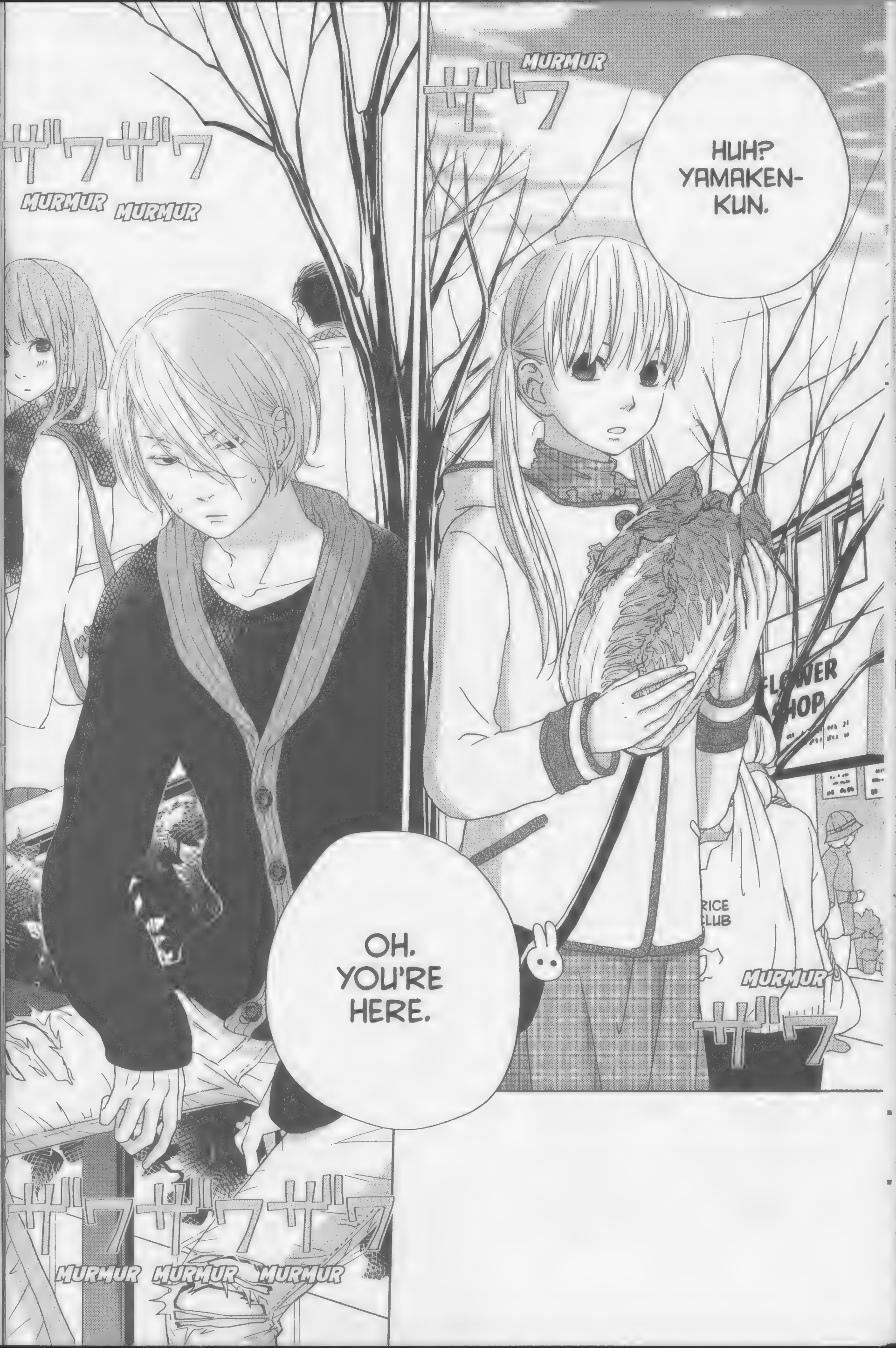

THIS WOULD ALL BE SOLVED IF I JUST NEVER LOOKED HER IN THE FACE, BUT WHENEVER I RUN INTO HER, I FEEL THESE STIRRINGS IN MY CHEST.
IS IT BECAUSE SHE'S SO UNFLAPPABLE? WOULD I BE SATISFIED IF SHE WOULD JUST FALL FOR ME?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW.

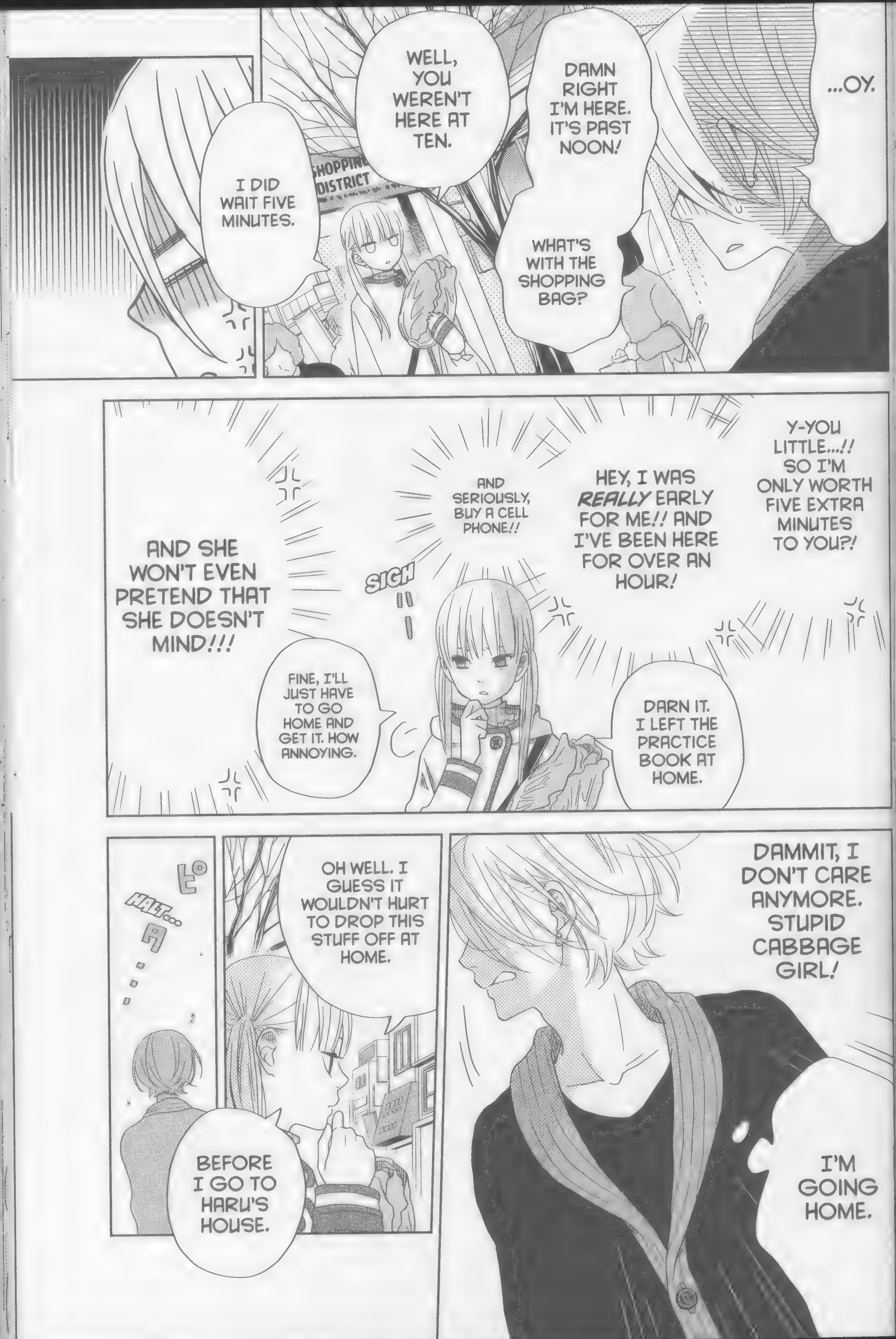
CHAPTER 27: TAKING A SPRING BREAK

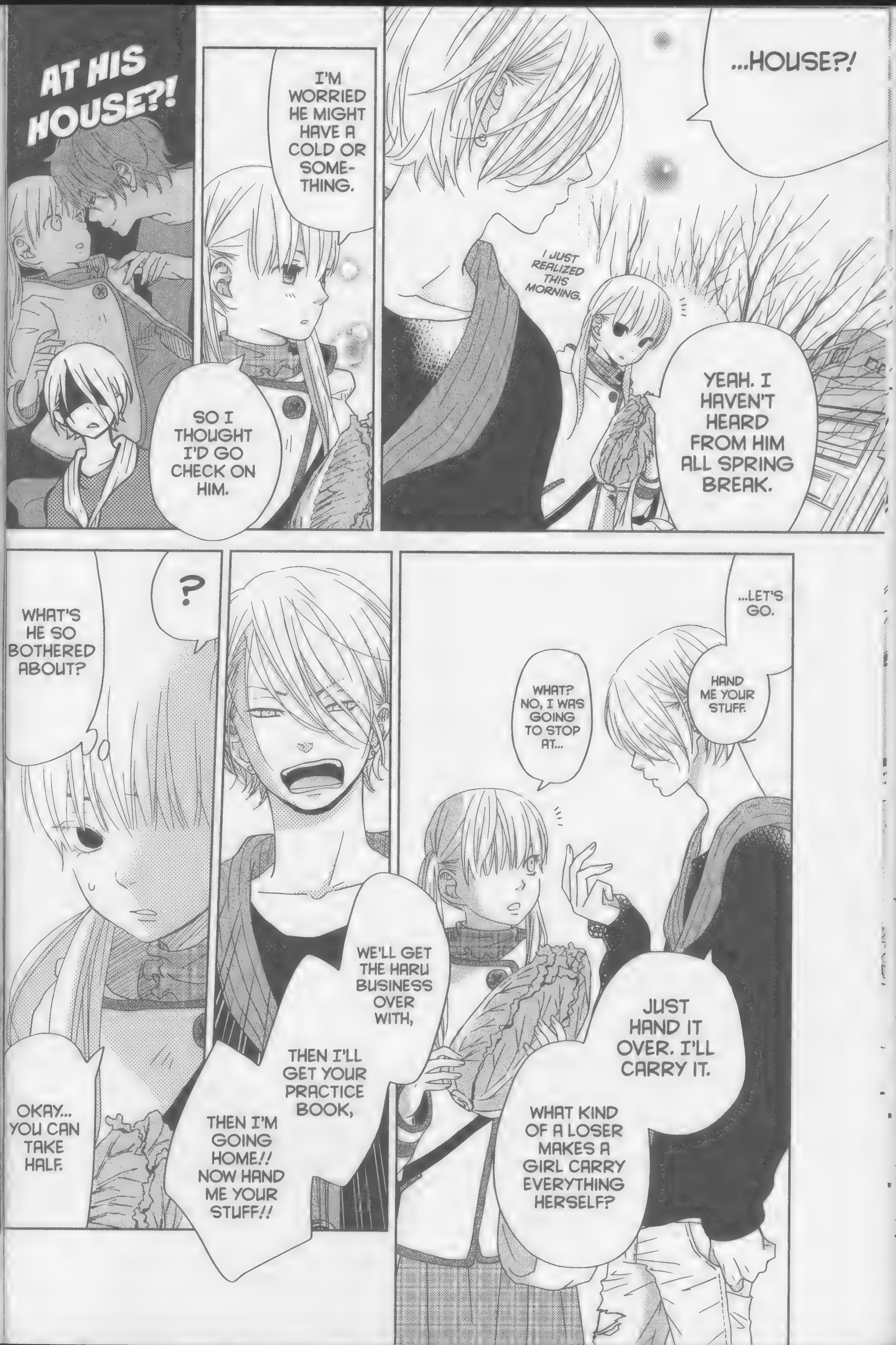

BUT DAWDLING AROUND HERE ISN'T GOING TO GET ME ANYWHERE.
IF I *CAN* MAKE HER MINE, THEN I WILL!!!
TURURU...
TURURU...
OH, HELLO. MY NAME IS YAMAGUCHI. IS SHIZUKU-SAN AT HOME?
...MAY I ASK WHO'S SPEAKING?
THIS IS YAMA-GUCHI.
LITTLE BROTHER?
WHEW...
ホッ
...
I'M SORRY, BUT I'M ONLY A LITTLE KID. I DON'T REALLY GET IT, SO I'M GOING TO LET YOU TALK TO MY FATHER.
FATHER?!
WHAT.

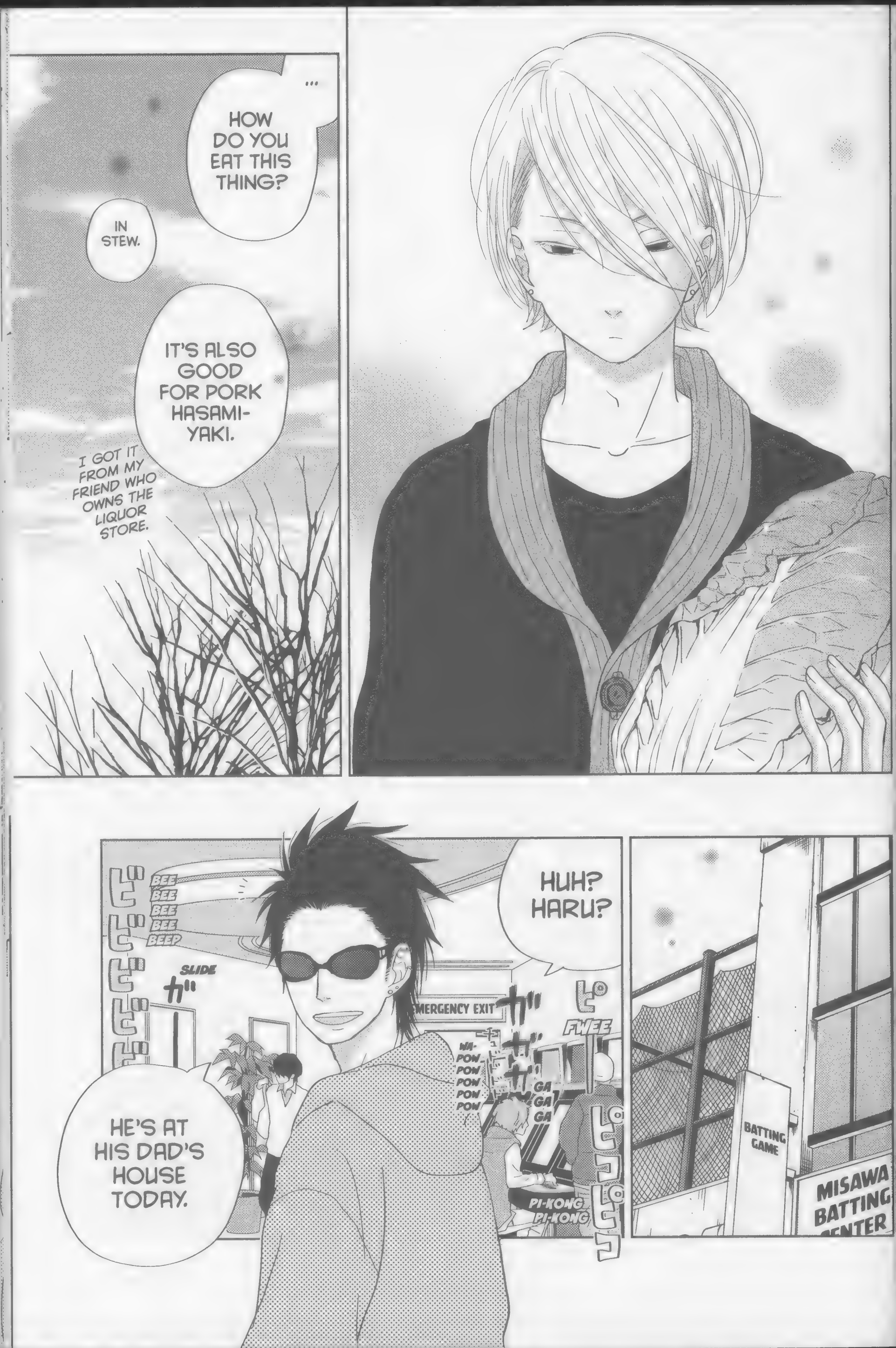

...DAD. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DAWDLE
WHAT'S THAT? KENJI YAMAGUCHI-SAN FROM KAIMEI ACADEMY? WHAT BUSINESS COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE WITH MY DAUGHTER?
NAG
DAWDLE
NAG
...ME?
HELLO? SHIZUKU SPEAKING.
NO, WHAT I MEAN IS... UH? OH! MIZUTANI-SAN?
?
...YAMAKEN-KUN?
...TCH.
DOES YOUR DAD ALWAYS ANSWER THE PHONE BY ASKING THE SAME PRYING QUESTIONS OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN?
HUFF PUFF
THIS IS WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO CALL A HOME PHONE!!
I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE HE WAS JUST AMUSED BY THE NOVELTY. ONLY A FEW PEOPLE EVER CALL FOR ME.
SO CAN I HELP YOU?
THAT KID... WAS A DECENT KID!!
LONG-CHERISHED DESIRE: TO DEAL WITH A BOY CALLING HIS DAUGHTER ON THE PHONE.
SNIFFLE
BOY WHO USUALLY CALLS. ↓
YO, SHIZUKU'S DAD! IS SHIZUKU THERE?
RICE CLUB
OH...HAVE YOU TRIED THIS YEAR'S CENTER TEST QUESTIONS?
DAMMIT, THAT OLD MAN MADE ME FORGET EVERYTHING I PLANNED TO SAY.
NOW WHAT DO I DO?
MAYBE I SHOULD INVITE HER TO MEET ME AT THE LIBRARY?
I DON'T LIKE DOING THE ASKING, BUT I CAN'T MAKE ANY MOVES IF I DON'T SEE HER IN PERSON.
THE CENTER TEST? YES, I'VE TRIED IT.
IS THIS WHAT HE WANTED TO CALL ME ABOUT?
DING

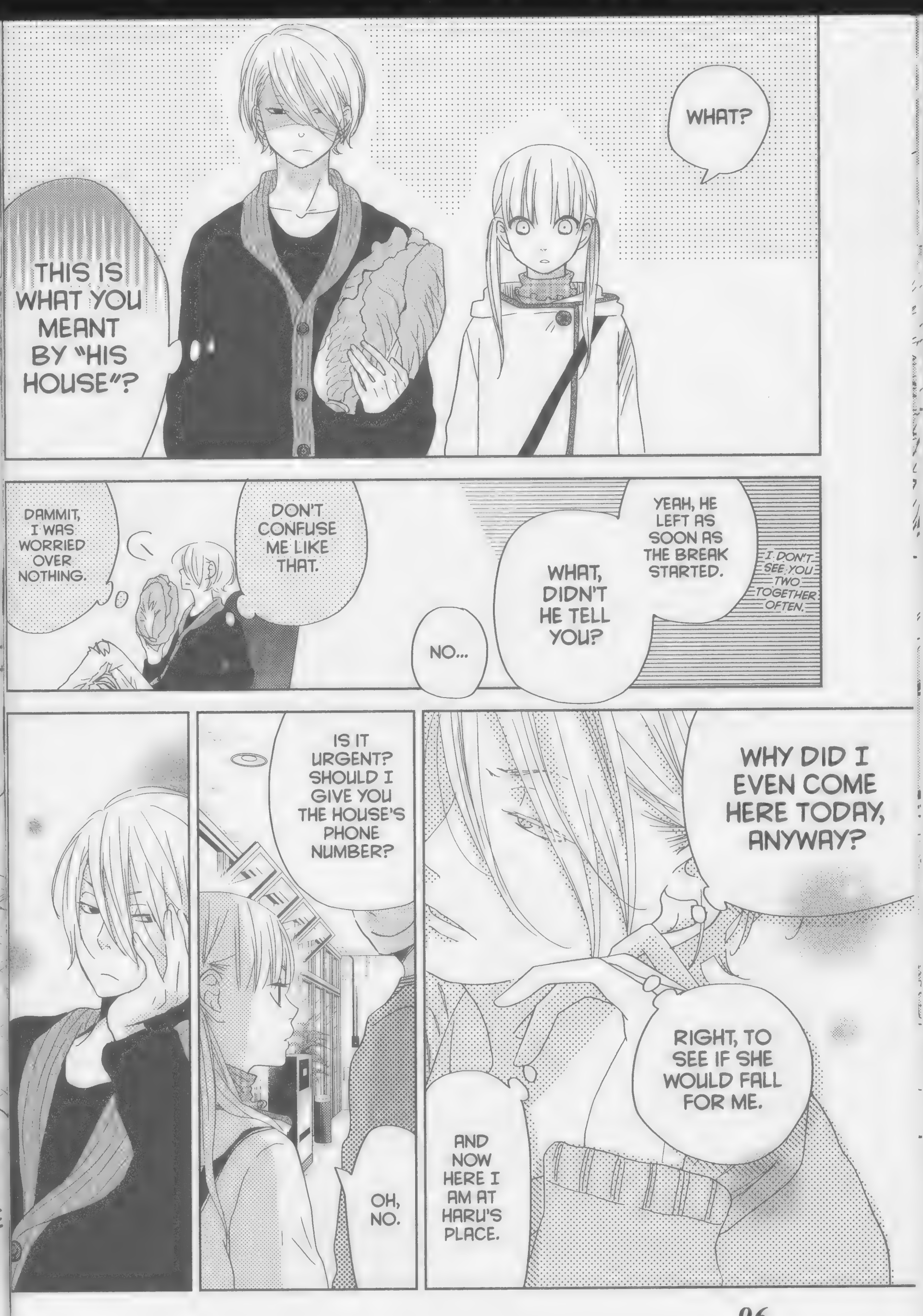

RUMBLE RUMBLE
TO TRADE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTER TEST!
I THINK YOU AND I COULD HAVE A PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION ABOUT IT.
I HAVE A GOOD BOOK OF PRACTICE QUESTIONS.
IF YOU WANT TO MEET UP, I CAN LEND IT TO YOU.
...SWEET.
SHE ASKED ME.
...SOUNDS GOOD.
OKAY.
THEN WE'LL MEET AT TEN AT...
RUMBLE RUMBLE
SHOPPING DISTRICT

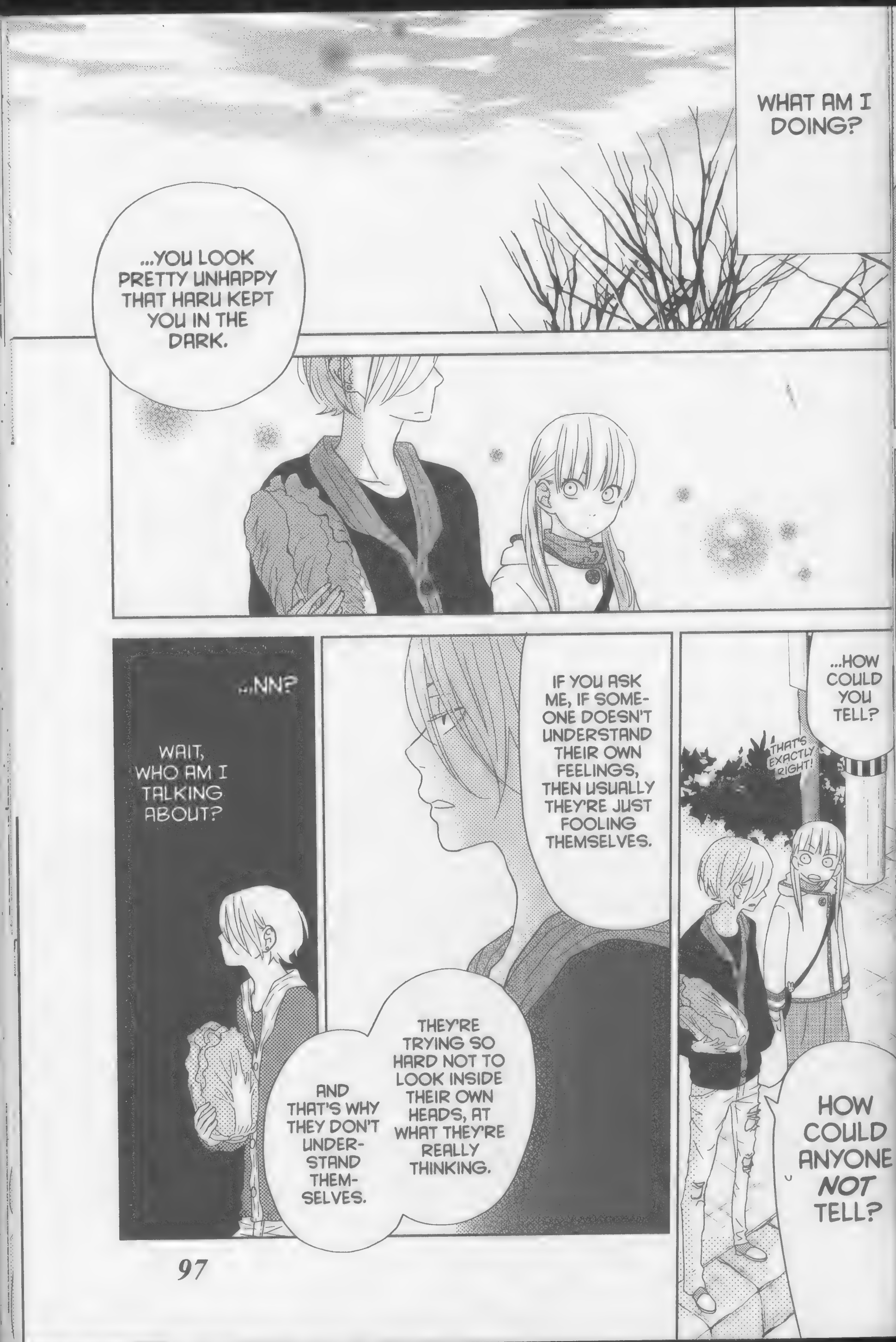

ザワ
MURMUR
HUH? YAMAKEN-KUN.
FLOWER SHOP
RICE CLUB
MURMUR
ザワ
ザワザワ
MURMUR MURMUR
OH. YOU'RE HERE.
ザワザワザワ
MURMUR MURMUR MURMUR

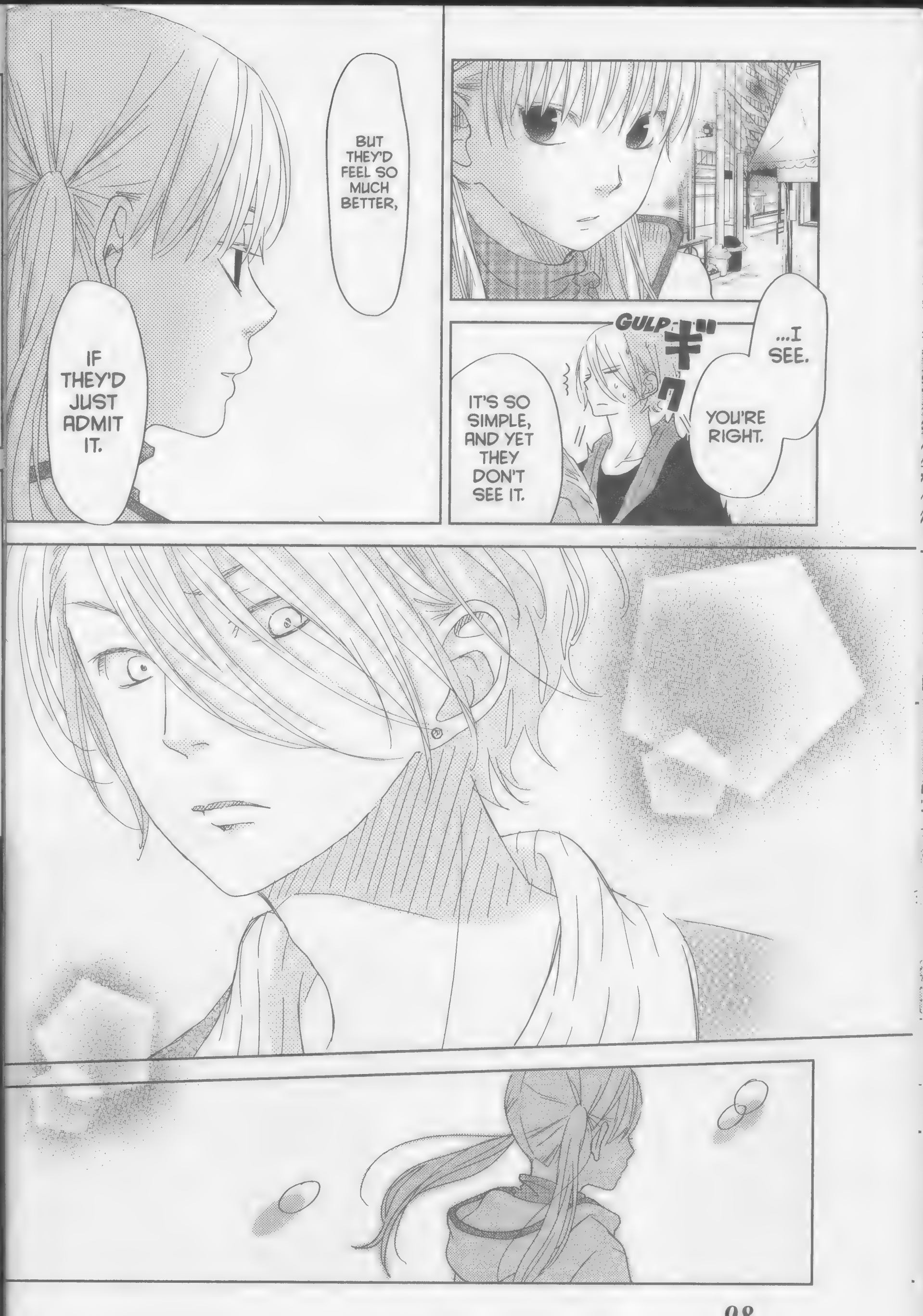

...OY.
DAMN RIGHT I'M HERE. IT'S PAST NOON!
WELL, YOU WEREN'T HERE AT TEN.
WHAT'S WITH THE SHOPPING BAG?
SHOPPING DISTRICT
I DID WAIT FIVE MINUTES.
Y-YOU LITTLE...!! SO I'M ONLY WORTH FIVE EXTRA MINUTES TO YOU?!
HEY, I WAS REALLY EARLY FOR ME!! AND I'VE BEEN HERE FOR OVER AN HOUR!
AND SERIOUSLY, BUY A CELL PHONE!!
DARN IT. I LEFT THE PRACTICE BOOK AT HOME.
SIGH
FINE, I'LL JUST HAVE TO GO HOME AND GET IT. HOW ANNOYING.
AND SHE WON'T EVEN PRETEND THAT SHE DOESN'T MIND!!!
DAMMIT, I DON'T CARE ANYMORE. STUPID CABBAGE GIRL!
I'M GOING HOME.
OH WELL. I GUESS IT WOULDN'T HURT TO DROP THIS STUFF OFF AT HOME.
BEFORE I GO TO HARU'S HOUSE.
ピ
HALT...
タ

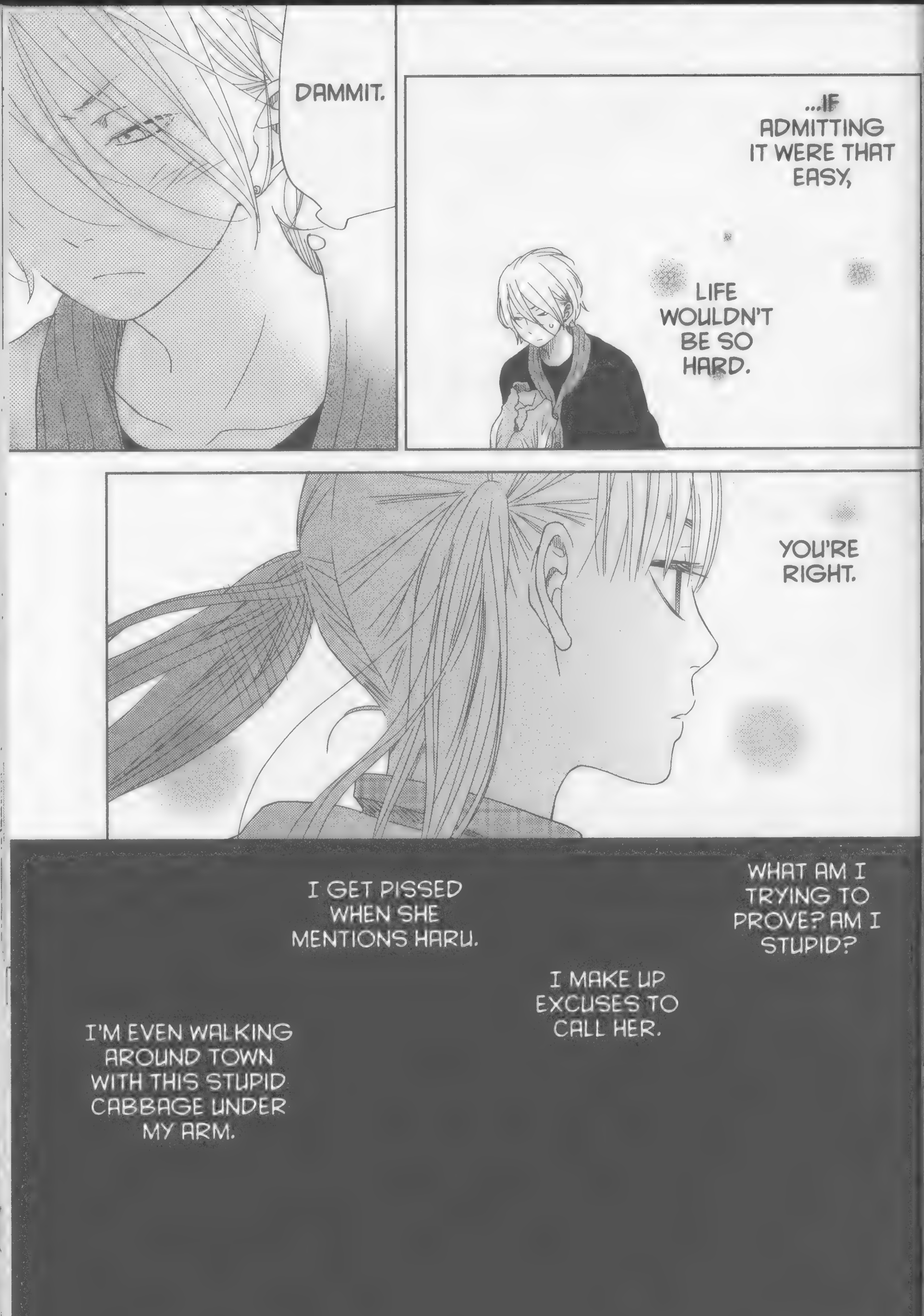

...HOUSE?!
YEAH. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM ALL SPRING BREAK.
I JUST REALIZED THIS MORNING.
I'M WORRIED HE MIGHT HAVE A COLD OR SOME-THING.
SO I THOUGHT I'D GO CHECK ON HIM.
AT HIS HOUSE?!
...LET'S GO.
HAND ME YOUR STUFF.
WHAT? NO, I WAS GOING TO STOP AT...
JUST HAND IT OVER. I'LL CARRY IT.
WHAT KIND OF A LOSER MAKES A GIRL CARRY EVERYTHING HERSELF?
?
WHAT'S HE SO BOTHERED ABOUT?
WE'LL GET THE HARU BUSINESS OVER WITH,
THEN I'LL GET YOUR PRACTICE BOOK,
THEN I'M GOING HOME!! NOW HAND ME YOUR STUFF!!
OKAY... YOU CAN TAKE HALF.

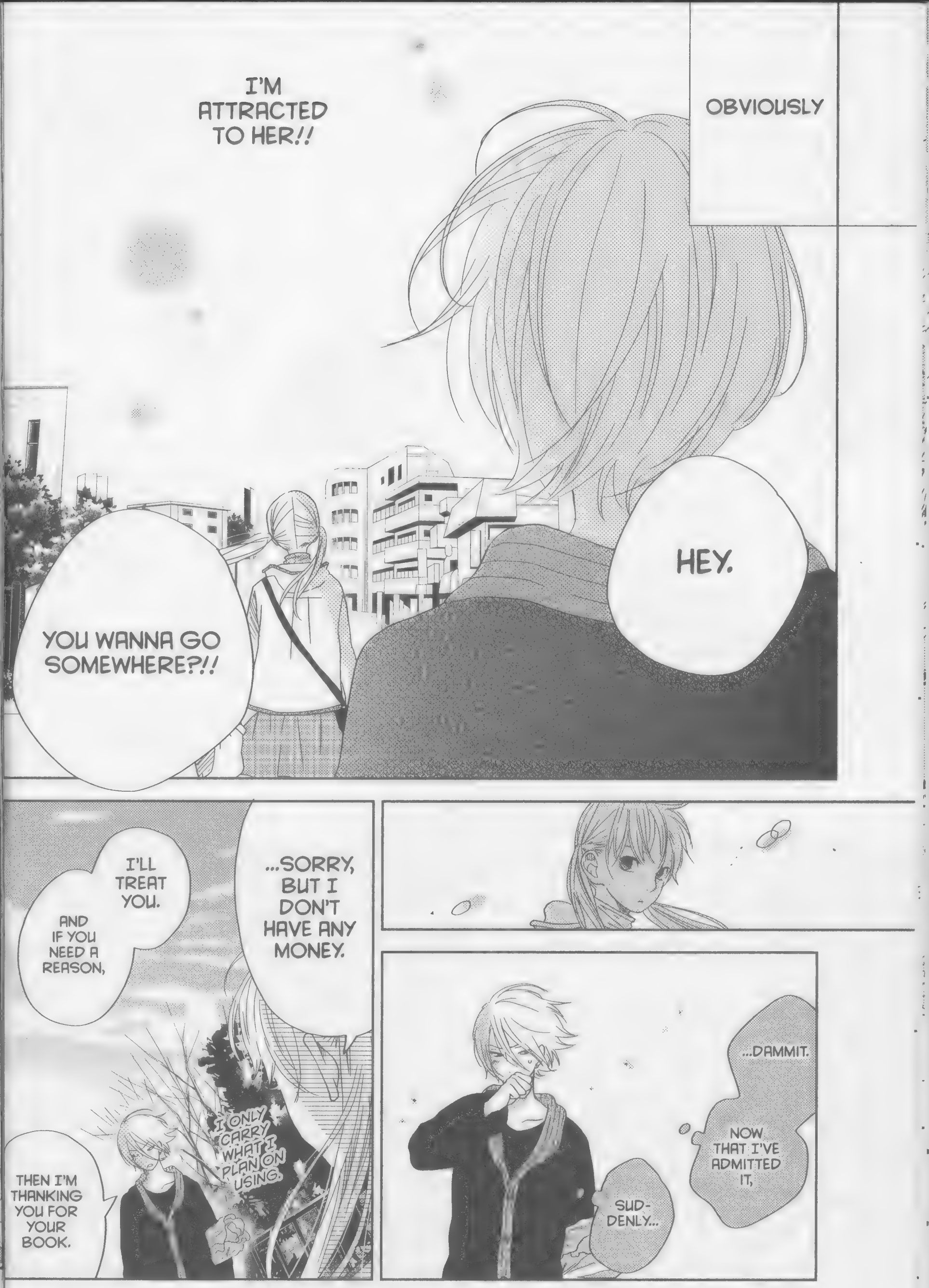

...
HOW DO YOU EAT THIS THING?
IN STEW.
IT'S ALSO GOOD FOR PORK HASAMI-YAKI.
I GOT IT FROM MY FRIEND WHO OWNS THE LIQUOR STORE.
BATTING GAME
MISAWA BATTING CENTER
HUH? HARU?
ピ
FWEE
ガガガ
GA GA GA
WA-PON POW POW POW POW
ピコピコ
PI-KONG PI-KONG
EMERGENCY EXIT
ガ
SLIDE
ビビビビビ
BEE BEE BEE BEE BEEP
HE'S AT HIS DAD'S HOUSE TODAY.

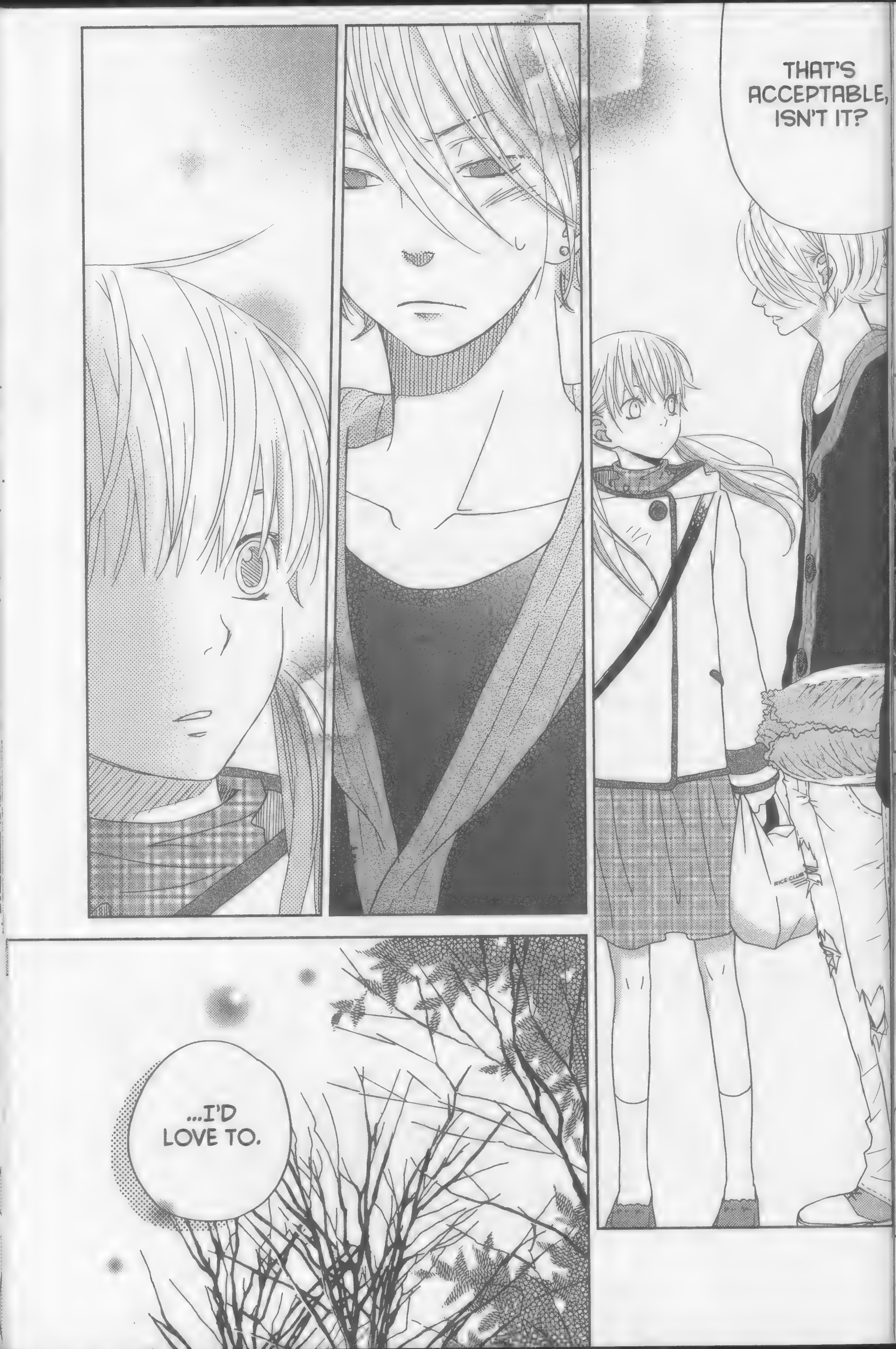

WHAT?
THIS IS WHAT YOU MEANT BY "HIS HOUSE"?
YEAH, HE LEFT AS SOON AS THE BREAK STARTED.
I DON'T SEE YOU TWO TOGETHER OFTEN.
WHAT, DIDN'T HE TELL YOU?
NO...
DON'T CONFUSE ME LIKE THAT.
DAMMIT, I WAS WORRIED OVER NOTHING.
WHY DID I EVEN COME HERE TODAY, ANYWAY?
RIGHT, TO SEE IF SHE WOULD FALL FOR ME.
AND NOW HERE I AM AT HARU'S PLACE.
IS IT URGENT? SHOULD I GIVE YOU THE HOUSE'S PHONE NUMBER?
OH, NO.

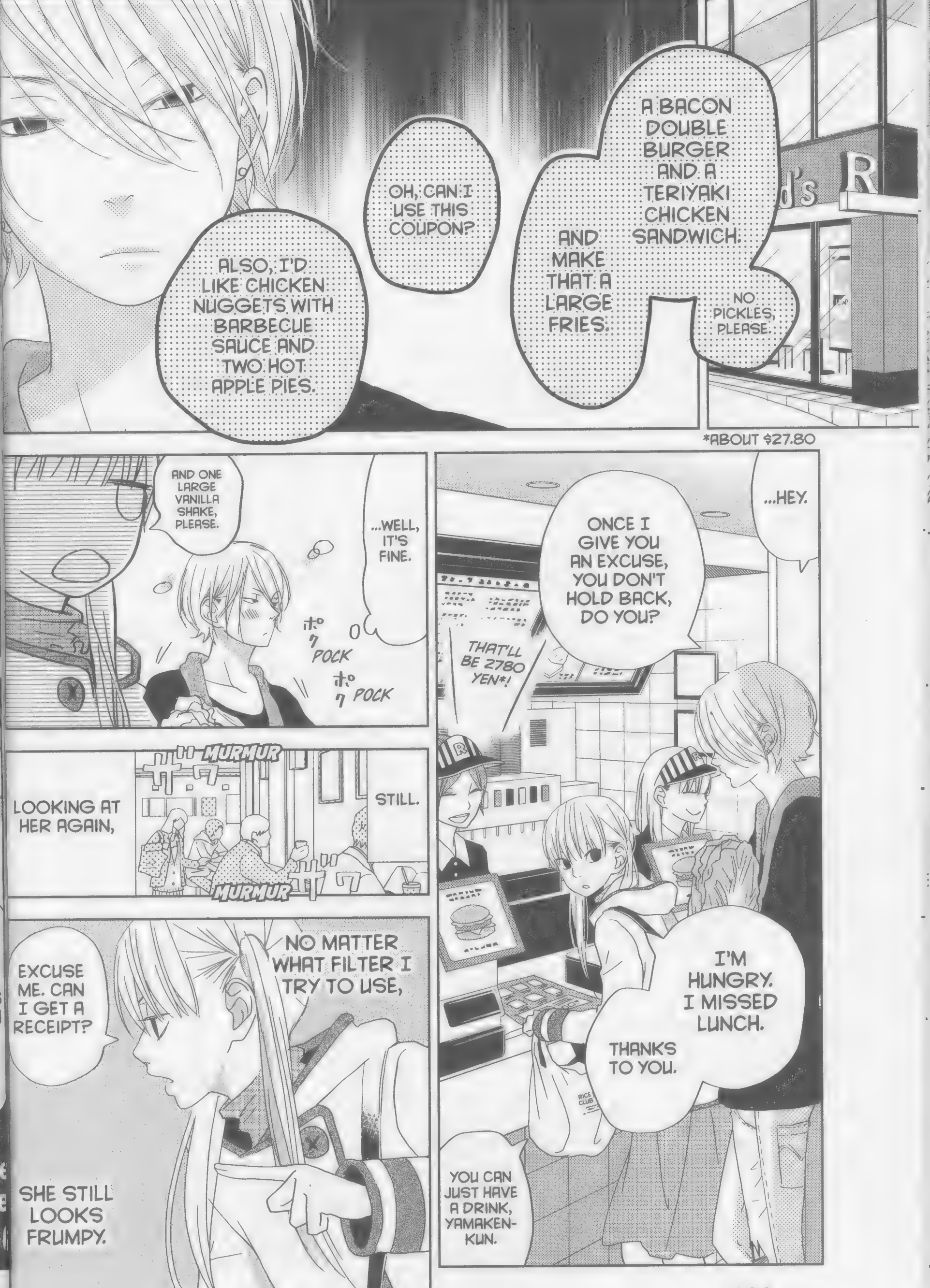

WHAT AM I DOING?
...YOU LOOK PRETTY UNHAPPY THAT HARU KEPT YOU IN THE DARK.
...HOW COULD YOU TELL?
THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT!
HOW COULD ANYONE NOT TELL?
IF YOU ASK ME, IF SOMEONE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN FEELINGS, THEN USUALLY THEY'RE JUST FOOLING THEMSELVES.
THEY'RE TRYING SO HARD NOT TO LOOK INSIDE THEIR OWN HEADS, AT WHAT THEY'RE REALLY THINKING.
AND THAT'S WHY THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES.
...NN?
WAIT, WHO AM I TALKING ABOUT?


...I SEE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
GULP
ギク
IT'S SO SIMPLE, AND YET THEY DON'T SEE IT.
BUT THEY'D FEEL SO MUCH BETTER,
IF THEY'D JUST ADMIT IT.

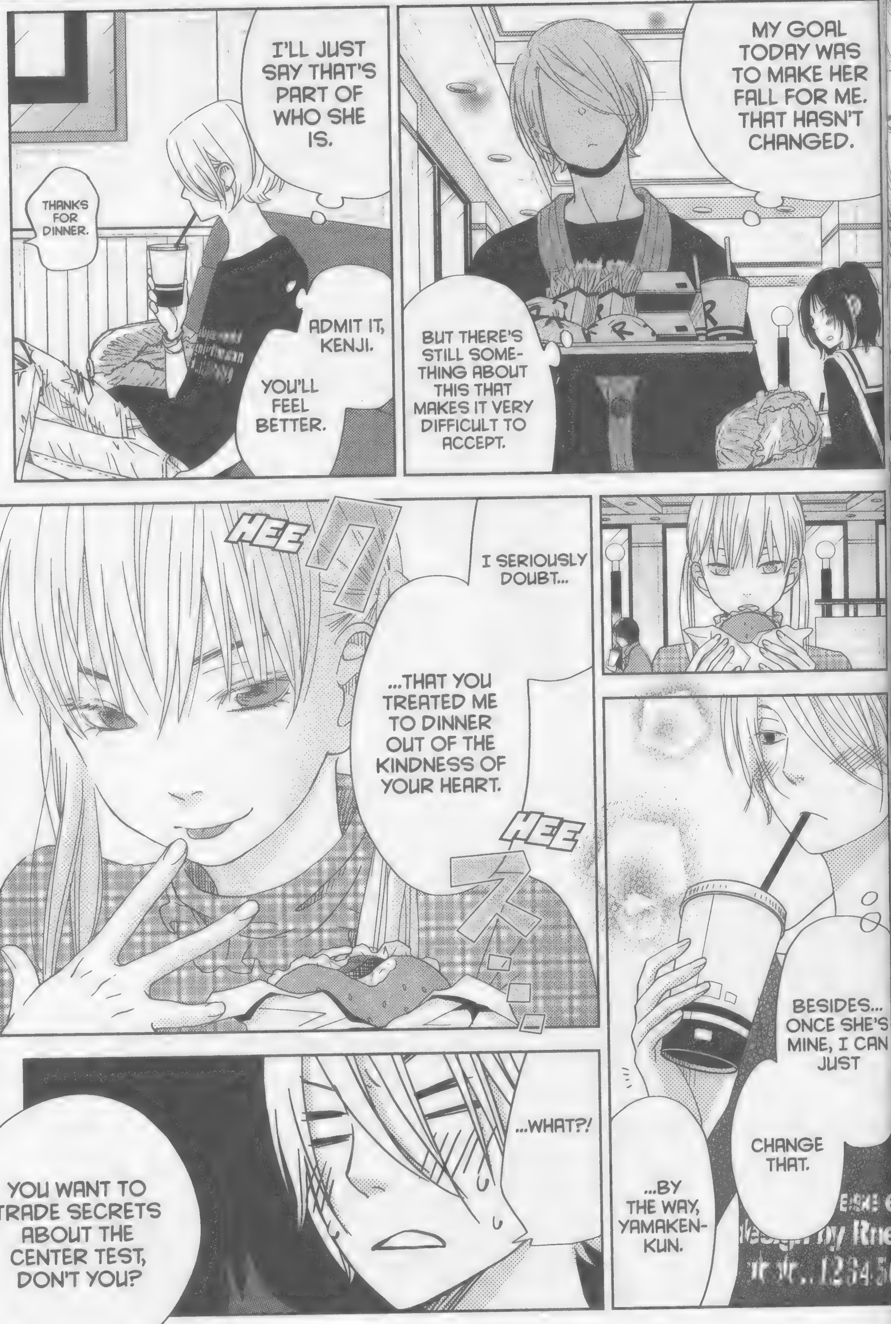

...IF ADMITTING IT WERE THAT EASY,
LIFE WOULDN'T BE SO HARD.
DAMMIT.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WHAT AM I TRYING TO PROVE? AM I STUPID?
I MAKE UP EXCUSES TO CALL HER.
I GET PISSED WHEN SHE MENTIONS HARU.
I'M EVEN WALKING AROUND TOWN WITH THIS STUPID CABBAGE UNDER MY ARM.

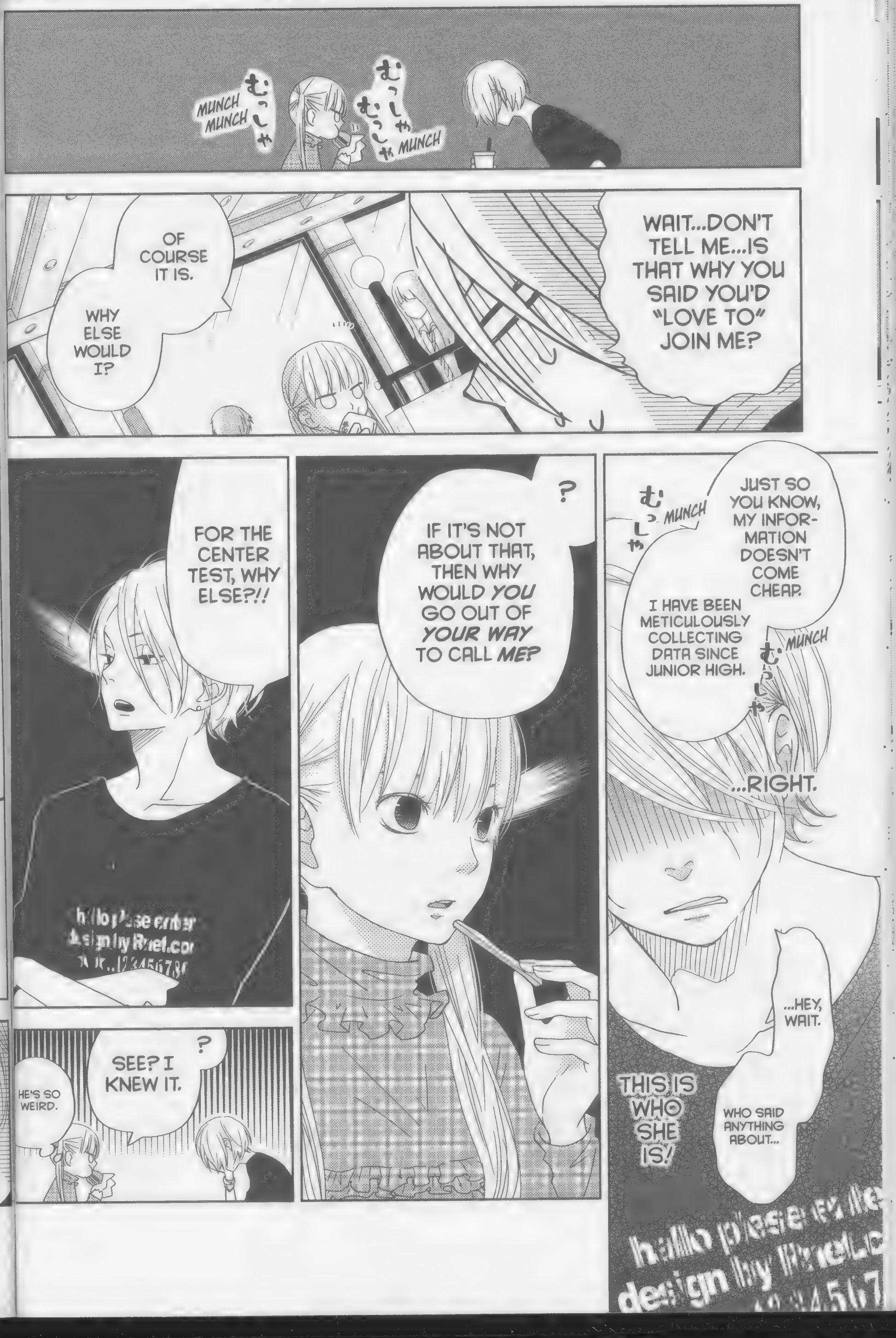

OBVIOUSLY
I'M ATTRACTED TO HER!!
HEY.
YOU WANNA GO SOMEWHERE?!!
...DAMMIT.
NOW THAT I'VE ADMITTED IT,
SUDDENLY...
...SORRY, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
I'LL TREAT YOU.
AND IF YOU NEED A REASON,
I ONLY CARRY WHAT I PLAN ON USING.
THEN I'M THANKING YOU FOR YOUR BOOK.

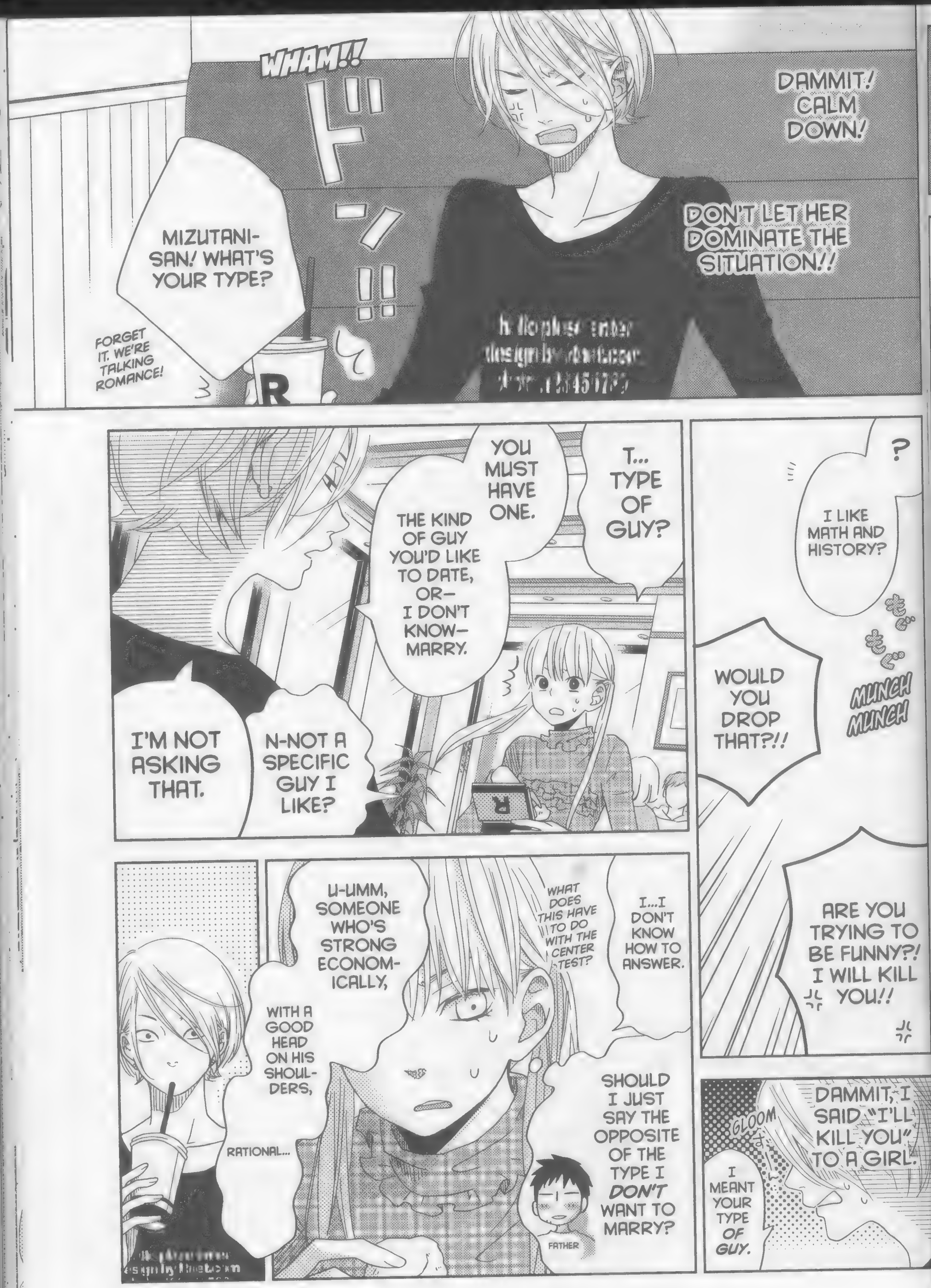

THAT'S ACCEPTABLE, ISN'T IT?
RICE CLUB
...I'D LOVE TO.

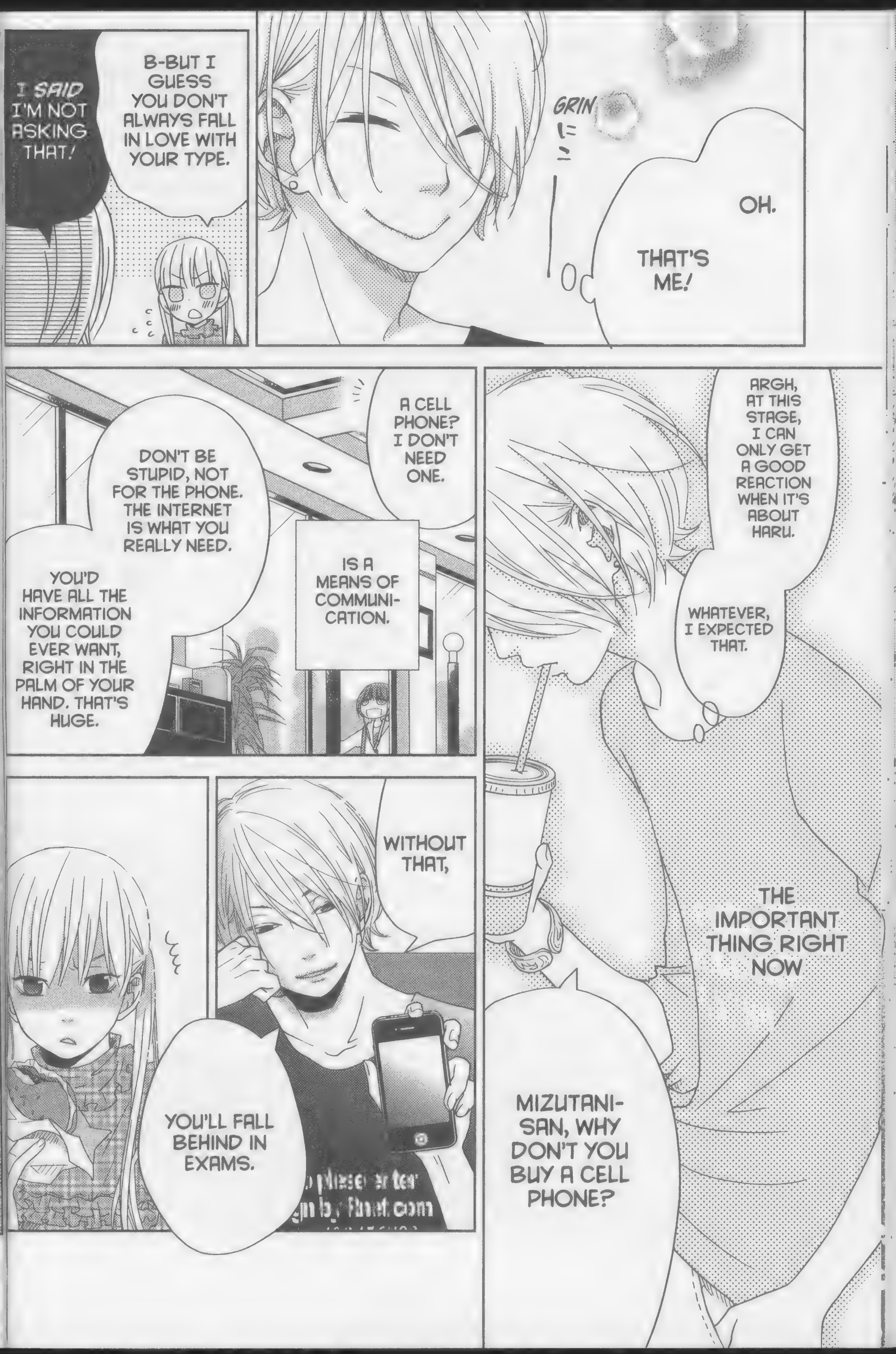

A BACON DOUBLE BURGER AND A TERIYAKI CHICKEN SANDWICH.
NO PICKLES, PLEASE.
AND MAKE THAT A LARGE FRIES.
OH, CAN I USE THIS COUPON?
ALSO, I'D LIKE CHICKEN NUGGETS WITH BARBECUE SAUCE AND TWO HOT APPLE PIES.
...HEY.
ONCE I GIVE YOU AN EXCUSE, YOU DON'T HOLD BACK, DO YOU?
THAT'LL BE 2780 YEN*!
I'M HUNGRY. I MISSED LUNCH.
THANKS TO YOU.
YOU CAN JUST HAVE A DRINK, YAMAKEN-KUN.
...WELL, IT'S FINE.
AND ONE LARGE VANILLA SHAKE, PLEASE.
POCK
POCK
STILL.
MURMUR
MURMUR
LOOKING AT HER AGAIN,
NO MATTER WHAT FILTER I TRY TO USE,
EXCUSE ME. CAN I GET A RECEIPT?
SHE STILL LOOKS FRUMPY.

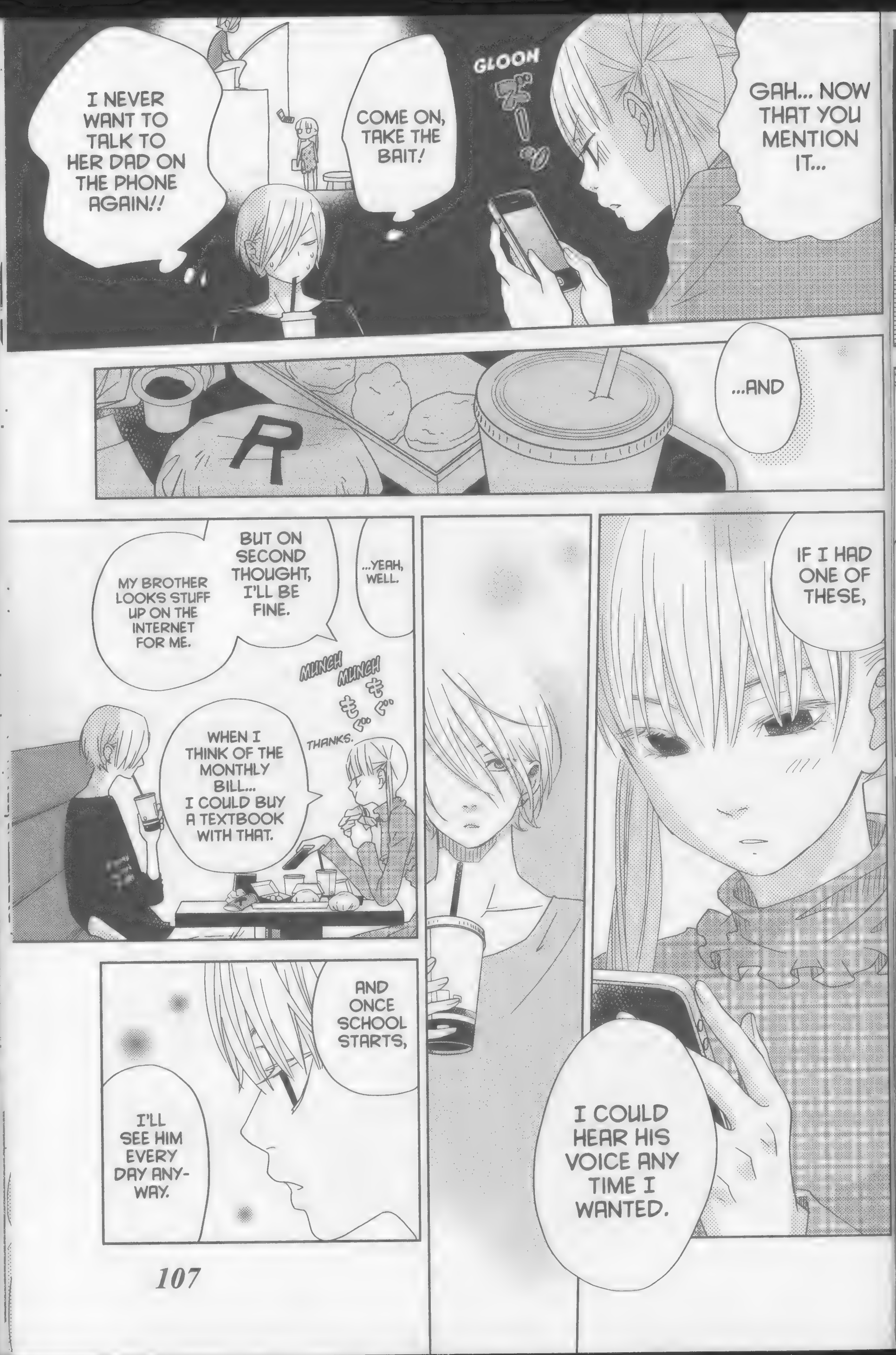
*ABOUT $27.80

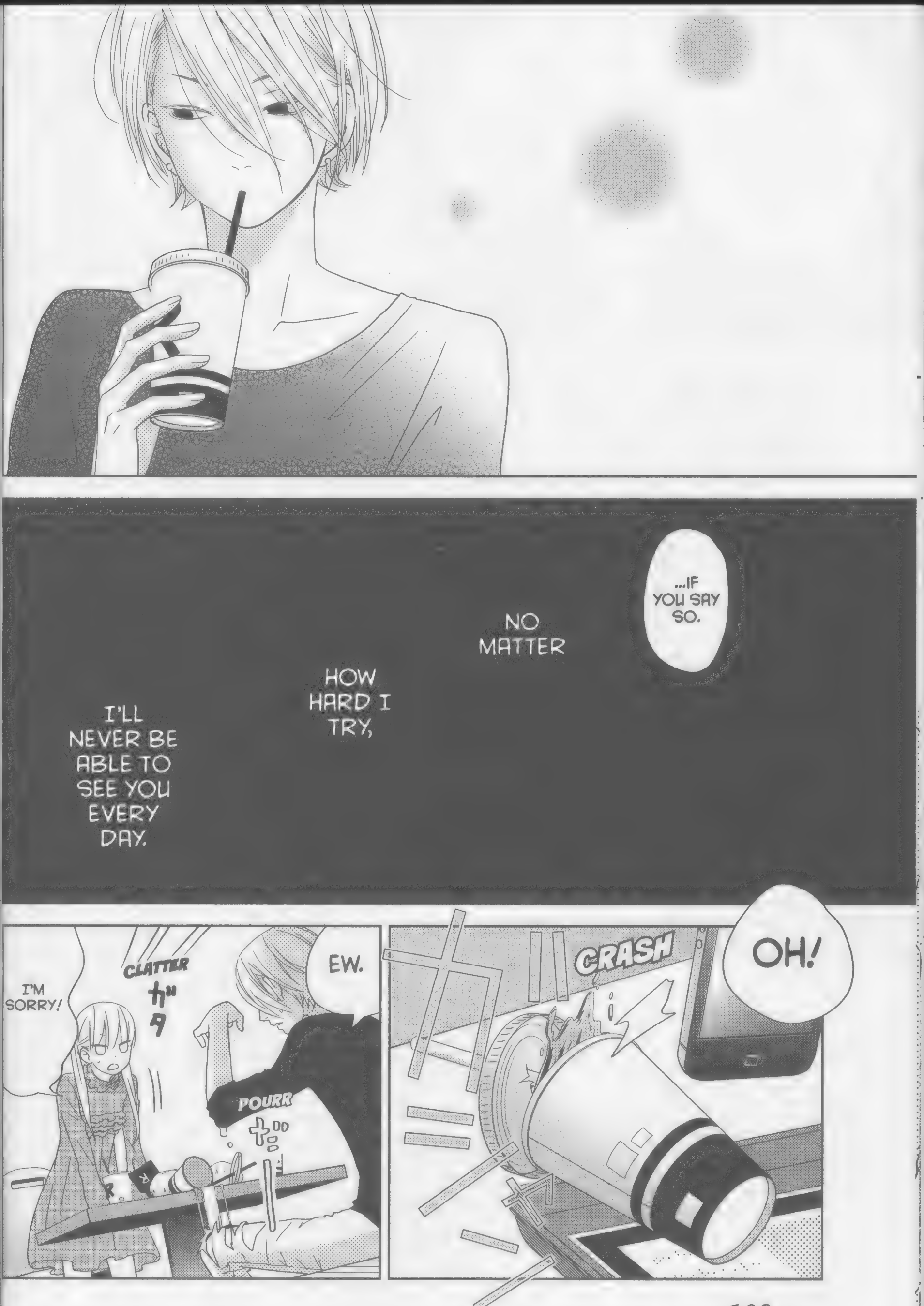

MY GOAL TODAY WAS TO MAKE HER FALL FOR ME. THAT HASN'T CHANGED.
BUT THERE'S STILL SOMETHING ABOUT THIS THAT MAKES IT VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT.
I'LL JUST SAY THAT'S PART OF WHO SHE IS.
THANKS FOR DINNER.
ADMIT IT, KENJI.
YOU'LL FEEL BETTER.
BESIDES... ONCE SHE'S MINE, I CAN JUST
CHANGE THAT.
...BY THE WAY, YAMAKEN-KUN.
I SERIOUSLY DOUBT...
HEE
...THAT YOU TREATED ME TO DINNER OUT OF THE KINDNESS OF YOUR HEART.
HEE
...WHAT?!
YOU WANT TO TRADE SECRETS ABOUT THE CENTER TEST, DON'T YOU?

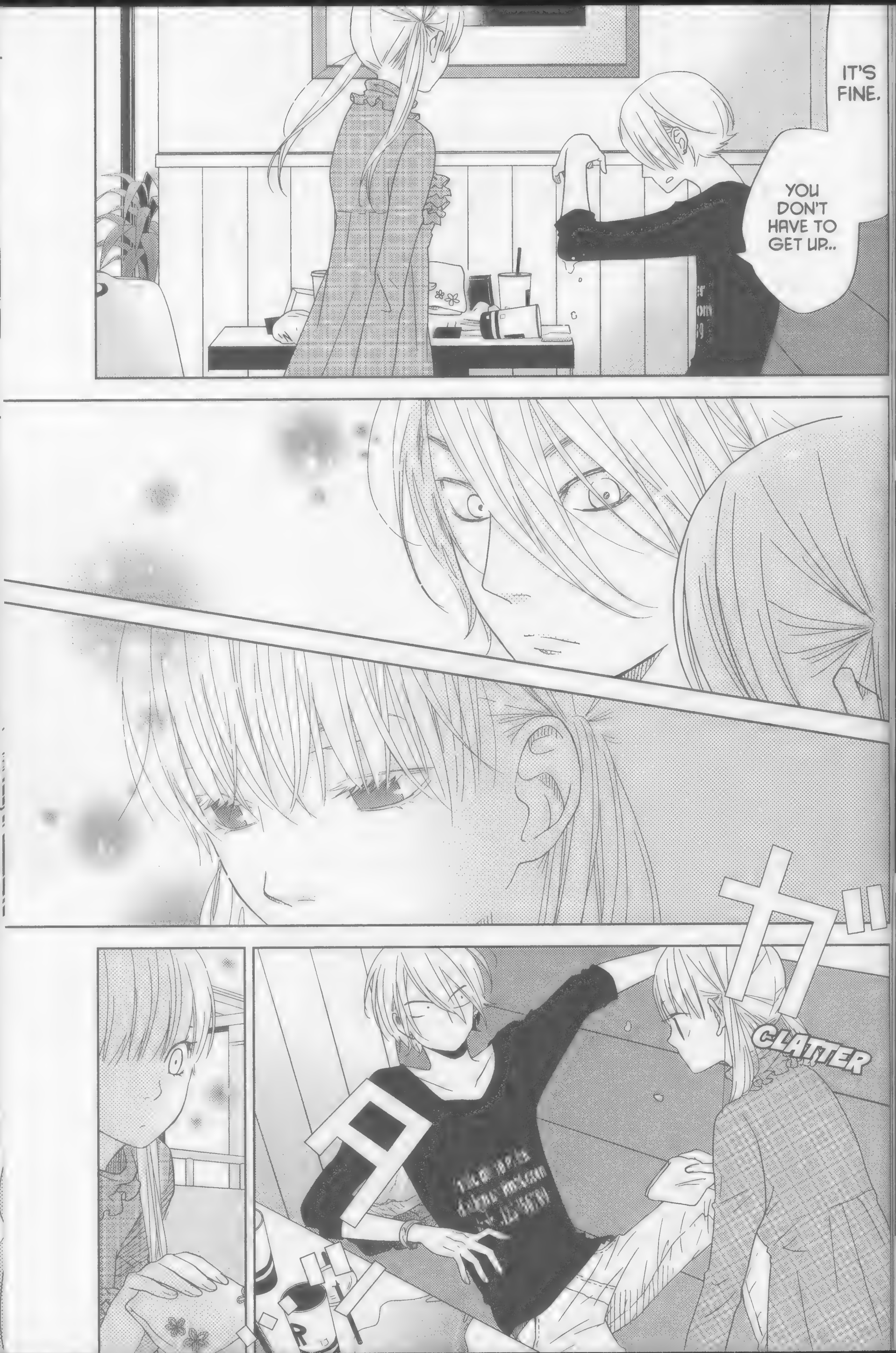

むっしゃ むっしゃ
MUNCH
MUNCH MUNCH
むっしゃ
WAIT...DON'T TELL ME...IS THAT WHY YOU SAID YOU'D "LOVE TO" JOIN ME?
OF COURSE IT IS.
WHY ELSE WOULD I?
むっしゃ MUNCH
JUST SO YOU KNOW, MY INFORMATION DOESN'T COME CHEAP.
I HAVE BEEN METICULOUSLY COLLECTING DATA SINCE JUNIOR HIGH.
MUNCH むっしゃ
...RIGHT.
?
IF IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT, THEN WHY WOULD *YOU* GO OUT OF *YOUR WAY* TO CALL *ME*?
FOR THE CENTER TEST, WHY ELSE?!!
...HEY, WAIT.
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT...
THIS IS WHO SHE IS!
?
SEE? I KNEW IT.
HE'S SO WEIRD.

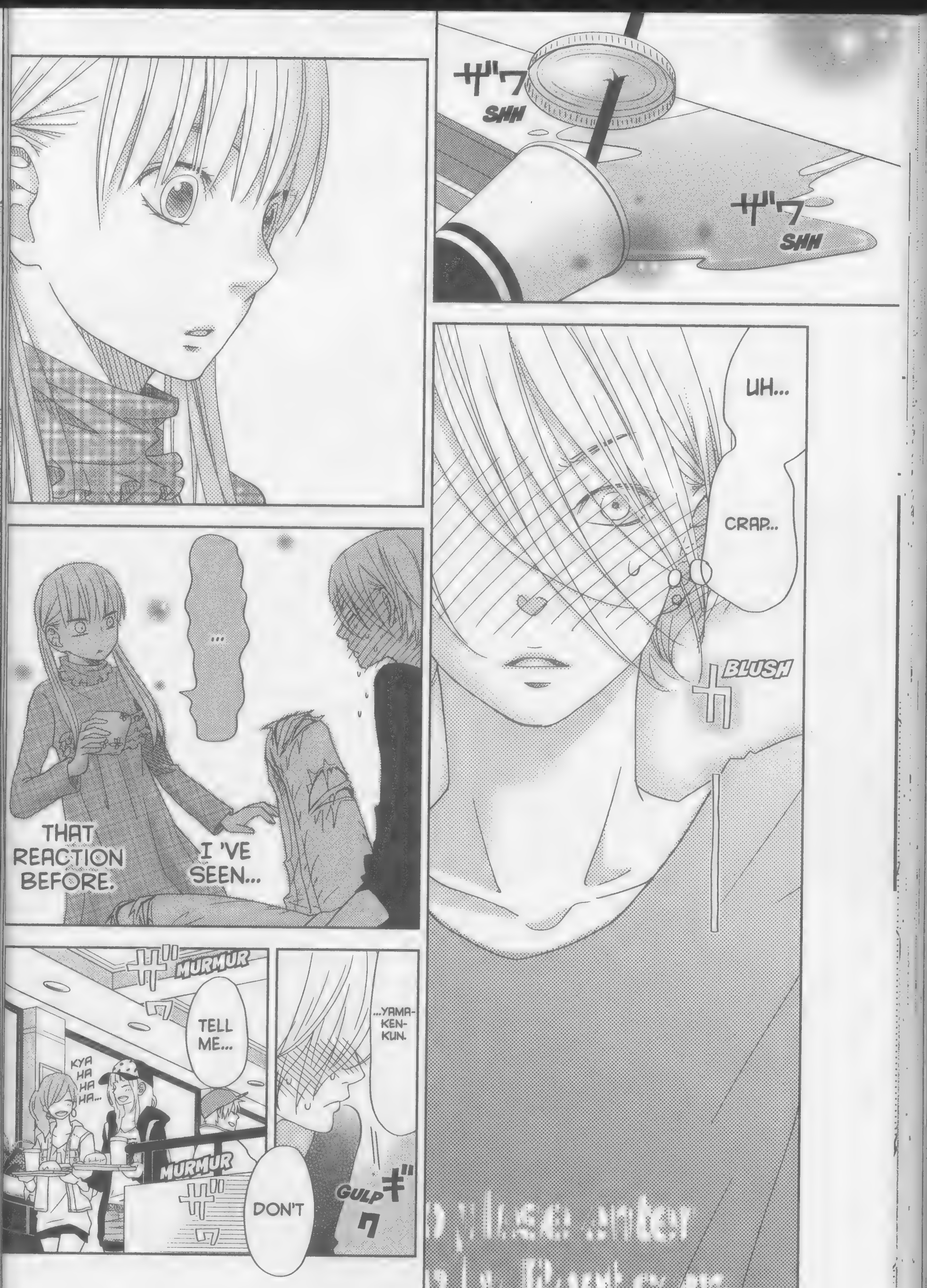

DAMMIT! CALM DOWN!
WHAM!!
ドーン!!
DON'T LET HER DOMINATE THE SITUATION!!
MIZUTANI-SAN! WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?
FORGET IT. WE'RE TALKING ROMANCE!
?
I LIKE MATH AND HISTORY?
もぐ もぐ
MUNCH MUNCH
WOULD YOU DROP THAT?!!
T... TYPE OF GUY?
YOU MUST HAVE ONE.
THE KIND OF GUY YOU'D LIKE TO DATE, OR— I DON'T KNOW— MARRY.
N-NOT A SPECIFIC GUY I LIKE?
I'M NOT ASKING THAT.
ARE YOU TRYING TO BE FUNNY?! I WILL KILL YOU!!
I...I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER.
WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE CENTER TEST?
U-UMM, SOMEONE WHO'S STRONG ECONOMICALLY,
WITH A GOOD HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS,
RATIONAL...
SHOULD I JUST SAY THE OPPOSITE OF THE TYPE I *DON'T* WANT TO MARRY?
FATHER
DAMMIT, I SAID "I'LL KILL YOU" TO A GIRL.
GLOOM
I MEANT YOUR TYPE *OF GUY*.


GRIN
ニ
ニ
OH.
THAT'S ME!
B-BUT I GUESS YOU DON'T ALWAYS FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR TYPE.
I SAID I'M NOT ASKING THAT!
ARGH, AT THIS STAGE, I CAN ONLY GET A GOOD REACTION WHEN IT'S ABOUT HARU.
WHATEVER, I EXPECTED THAT.
THE IMPORTANT THING RIGHT NOW
MIZUTANI-SAN, WHY DON'T YOU BUY A CELL PHONE?
A CELL PHONE? I DON'T NEED ONE.
IS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.
DON'T BE STUPID, NOT FOR THE PHONE. THE INTERNET IS WHAT YOU REALLY NEED.
YOU'D HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION YOU COULD EVER WANT, RIGHT IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND. THAT'S HUGE.
WITHOUT THAT,
YOU'LL FALL BEHIND IN EXAMS.


GAH... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
GLOON
ズーン
COME ON, TAKE THE BAIT!
I NEVER WANT TO TALK TO HER DAD ON THE PHONE AGAIN!!
...AND
IF I HAD ONE OF THESE,
I COULD HEAR HIS VOICE ANY TIME I WANTED.
...YEAH, WELL.
BUT ON SECOND THOUGHT, I'LL BE FINE.
MY BROTHER LOOKS STUFF UP ON THE INTERNET FOR ME.
MUNCH MUNCH
もぐもぐ
THANKS.
WHEN I THINK OF THE MONTHLY BILL... I COULD BUY A TEXTBOOK WITH THAT.
AND ONCE SCHOOL STARTS,
I'LL SEE HIM EVERY DAY ANYWAY.


...IF YOU SAY SO.
NO MATTER
HOW HARD I TRY,
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE YOU EVERY DAY.
OH!
CRASH
EW.
CLATTER ガタ
I'M SORRY!
POURR


IT'S FINE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET UP...
ガ
CLATTER
タ


ザワ
SHH
ザワ
SHH
UH...
CRAP...
BLUSH
カ
...
I'VE SEEN...
THAT REACTION BEFORE.
...YAMA-KEN-KUN.
DON'T
GULP
ギク
MURMUR
ザワ
TELL ME...
KYA HA HA HA...
MURMUR
ザワ

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n by Raet.com
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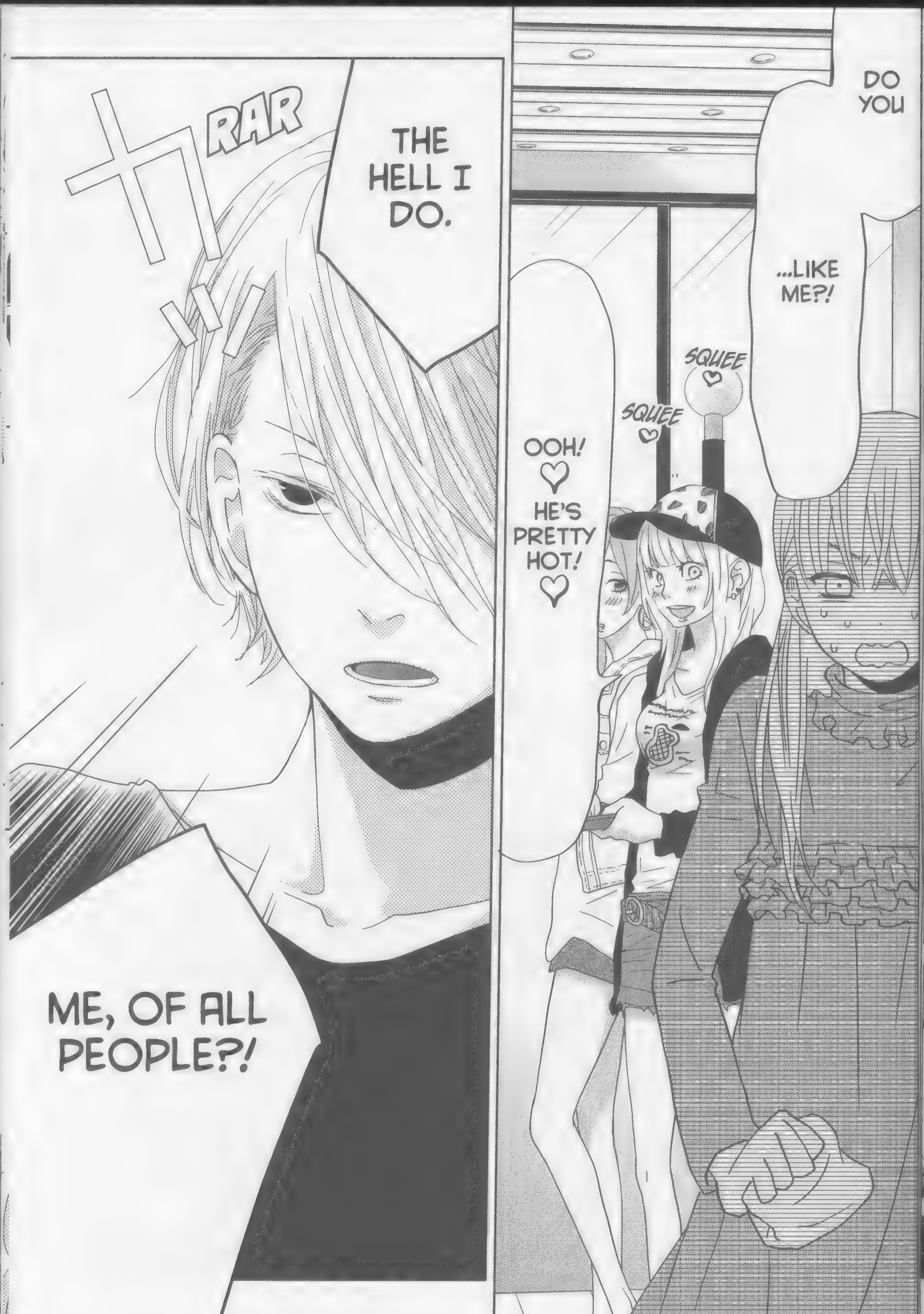
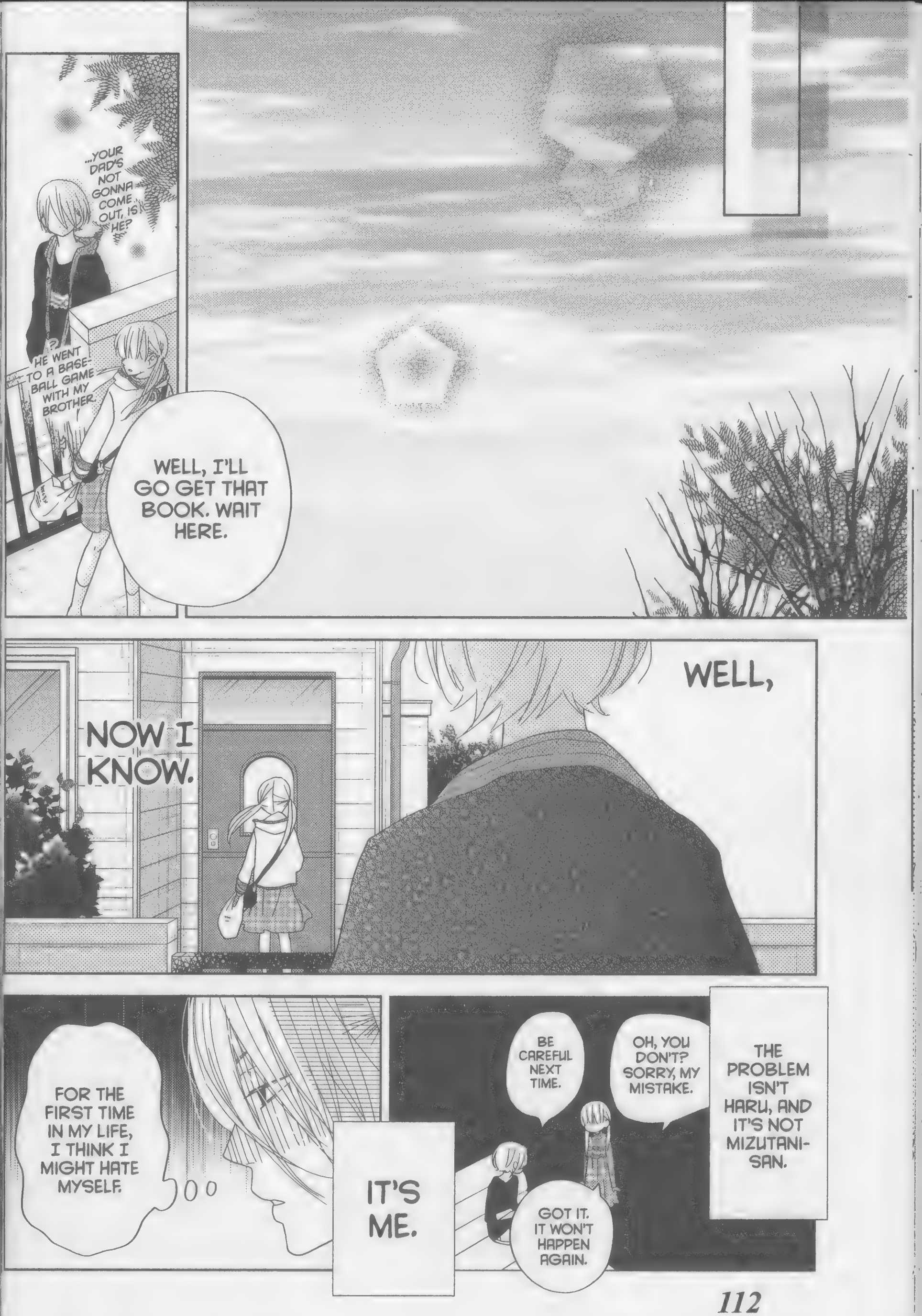
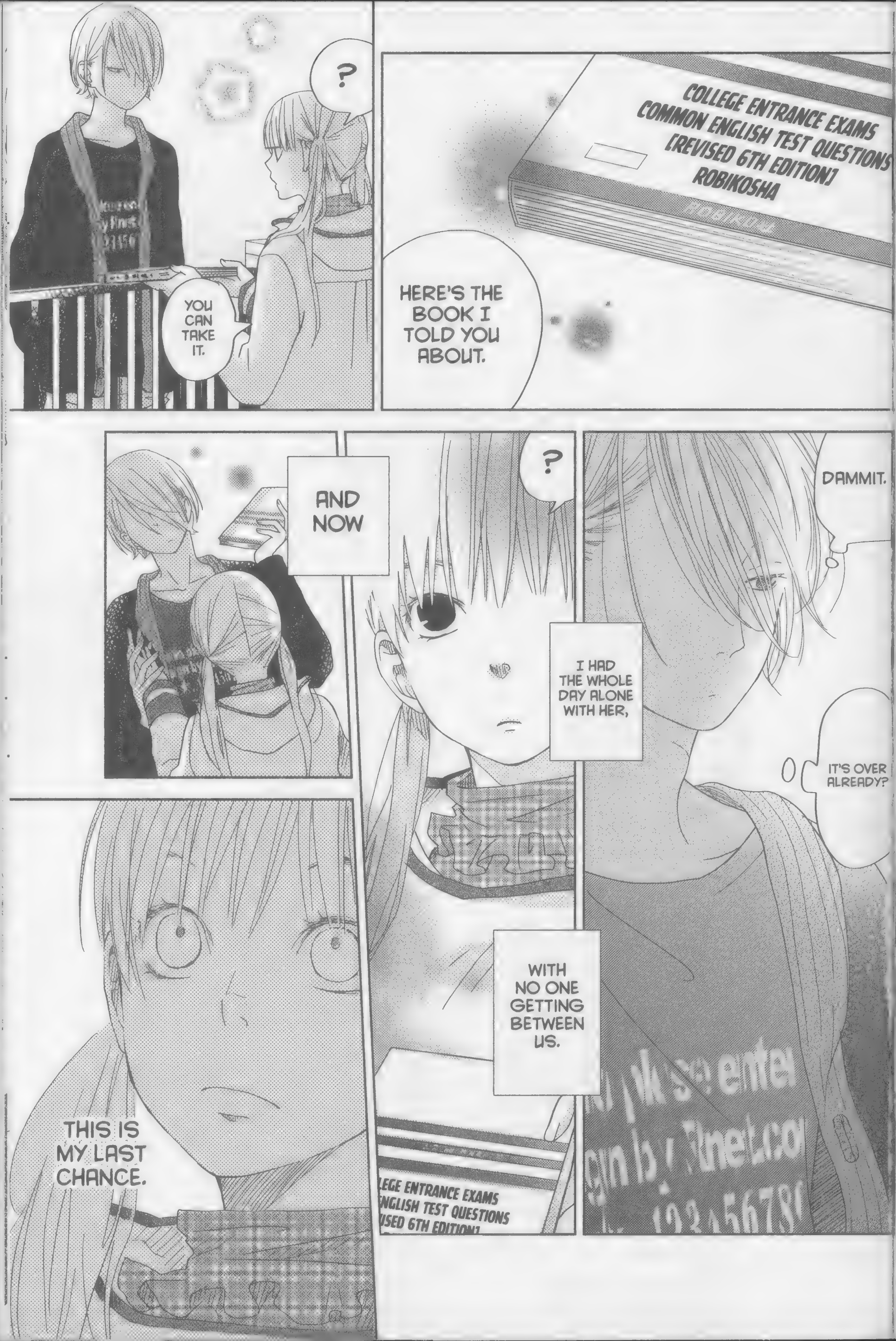
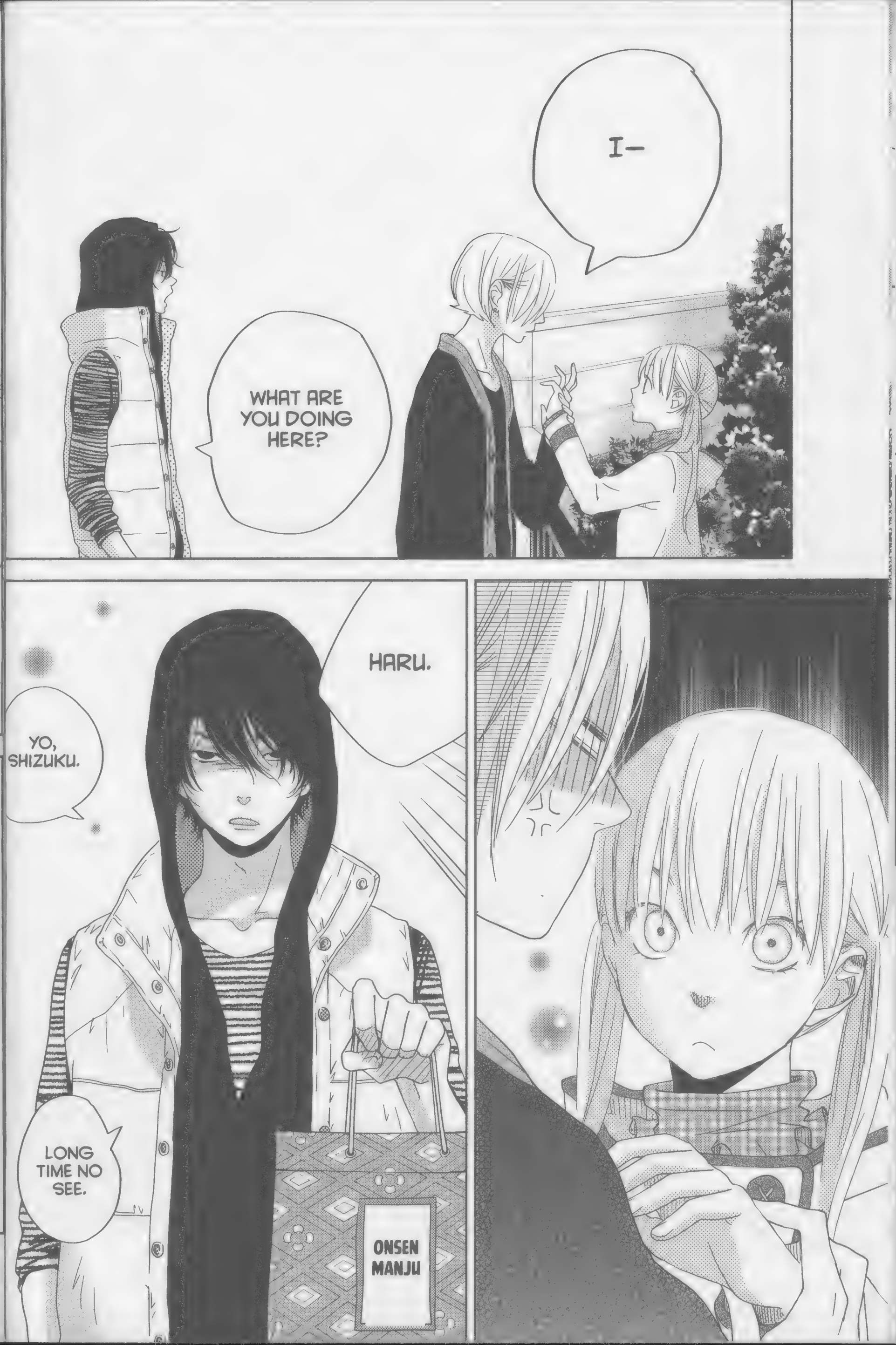
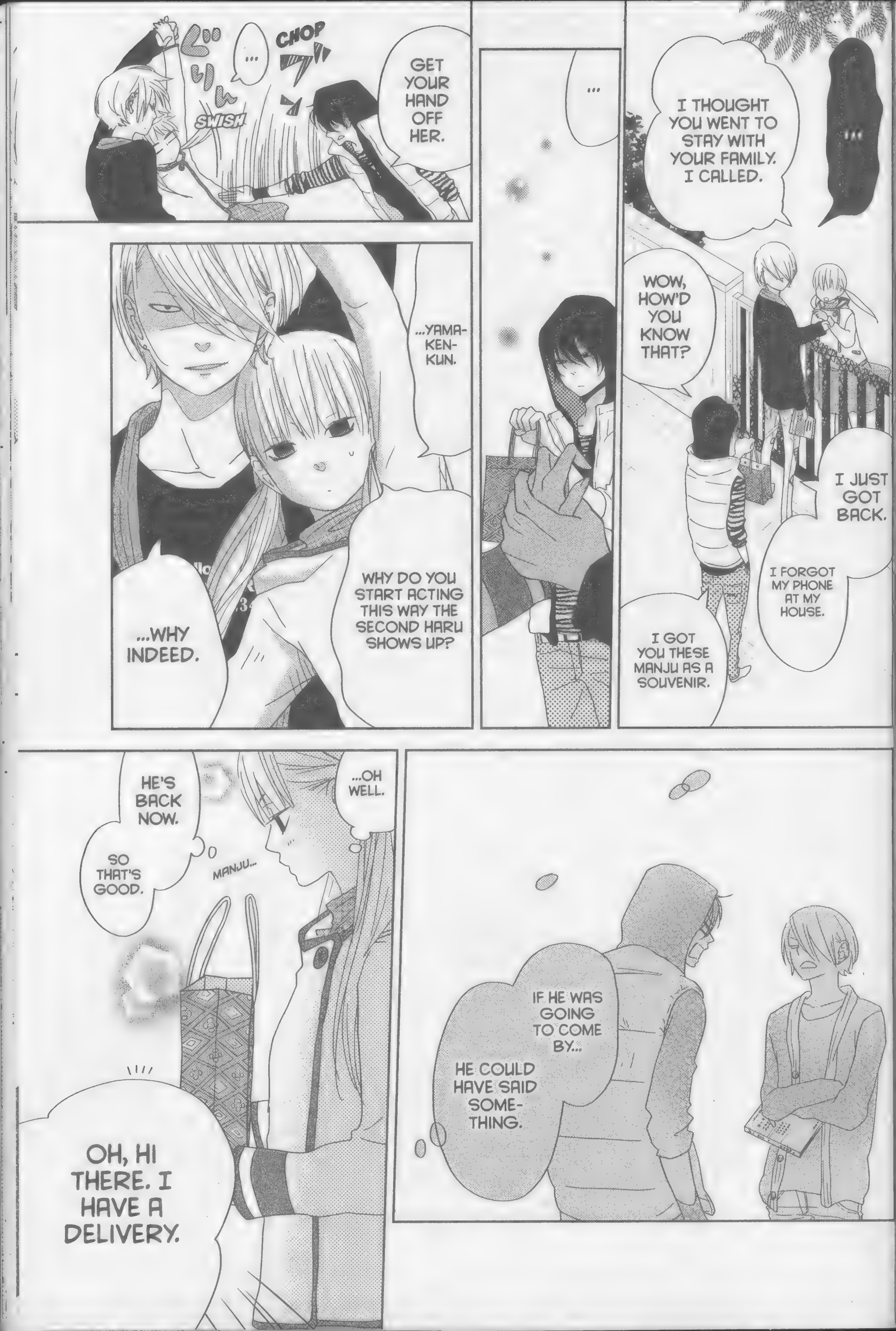
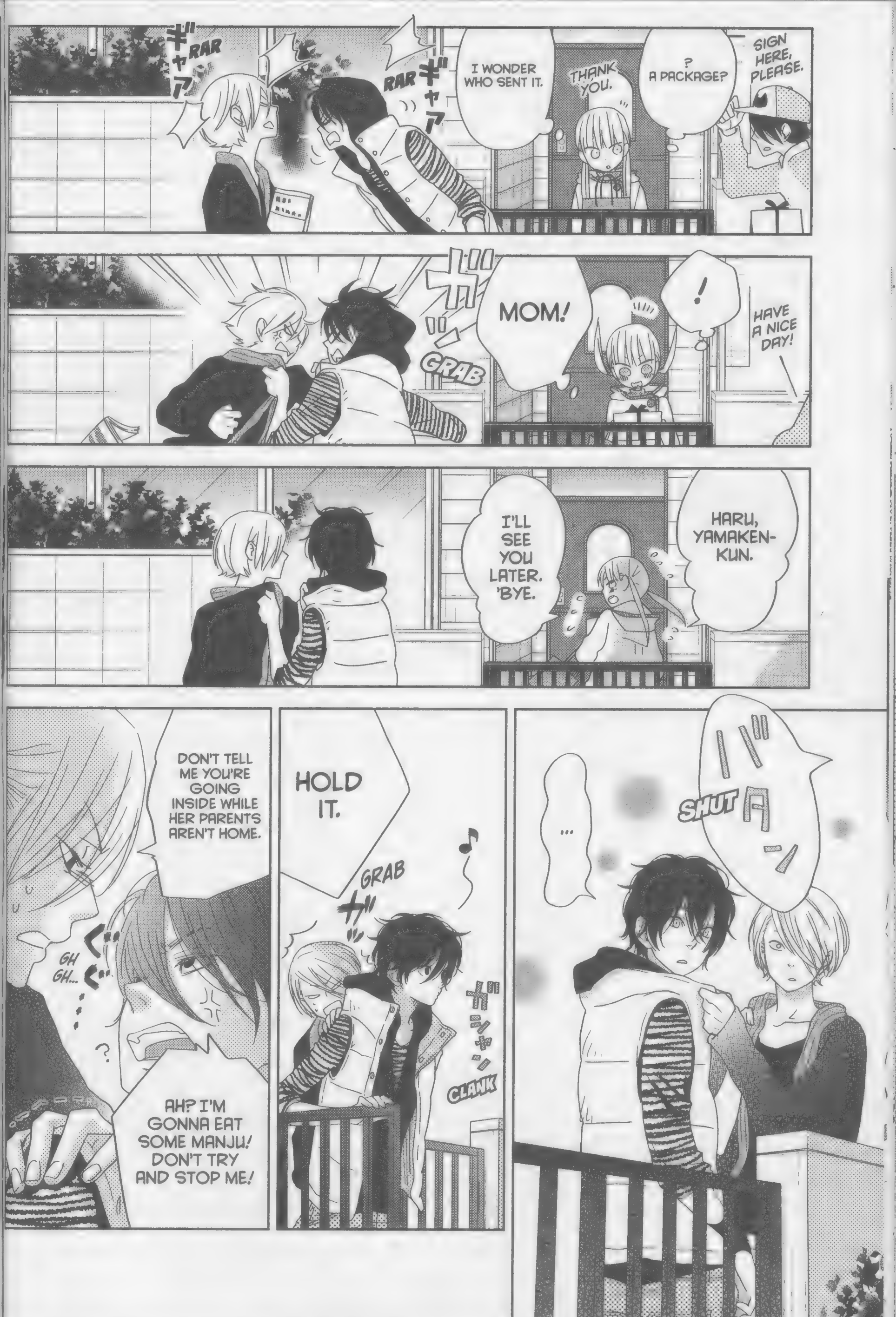

DO YOU
...LIKE ME?!
SQUEE ♡
SQUEE ♡
OOH! ♡
HE'S PRETTY HOT! ♡
カッ
RAR
THE HELL I DO.
ME, OF ALL PEOPLE?!

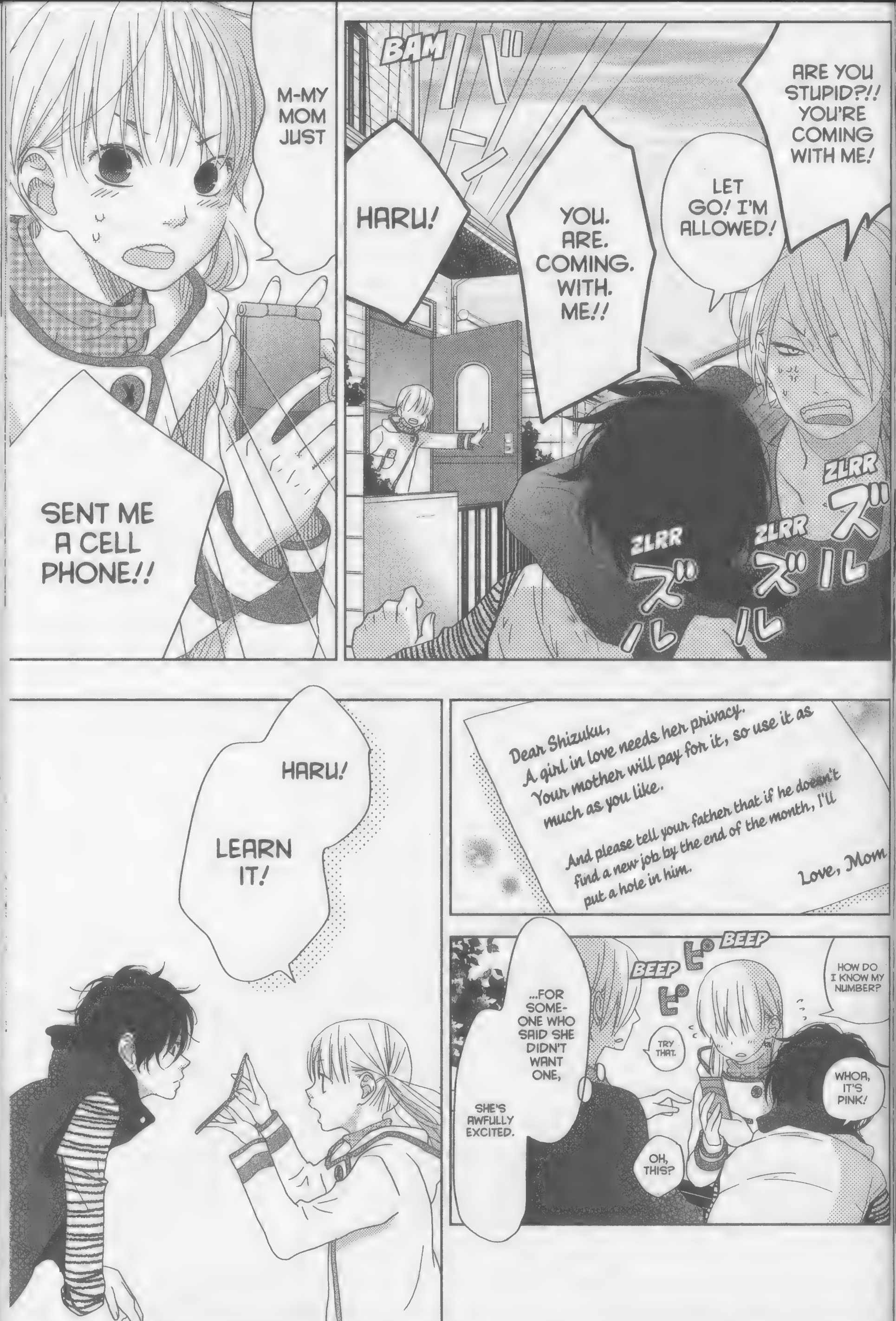

...YOUR DAD'S NOT GONNA COME OUT, IS HE?
?
HE WENT TO A BASEBALL GAME WITH MY BROTHER.
WELL, I'LL GO GET THAT BOOK. WAIT HERE.
WELL,
NOW I KNOW.
THE PROBLEM ISN'T HARU, AND IT'S NOT MIZUTANI-SAN.
OH, YOU DON'T? SORRY, MY MISTAKE.
BE CAREFUL NEXT TIME.
GOT IT. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
IT'S ME.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I THINK I MIGHT HATE MYSELF.

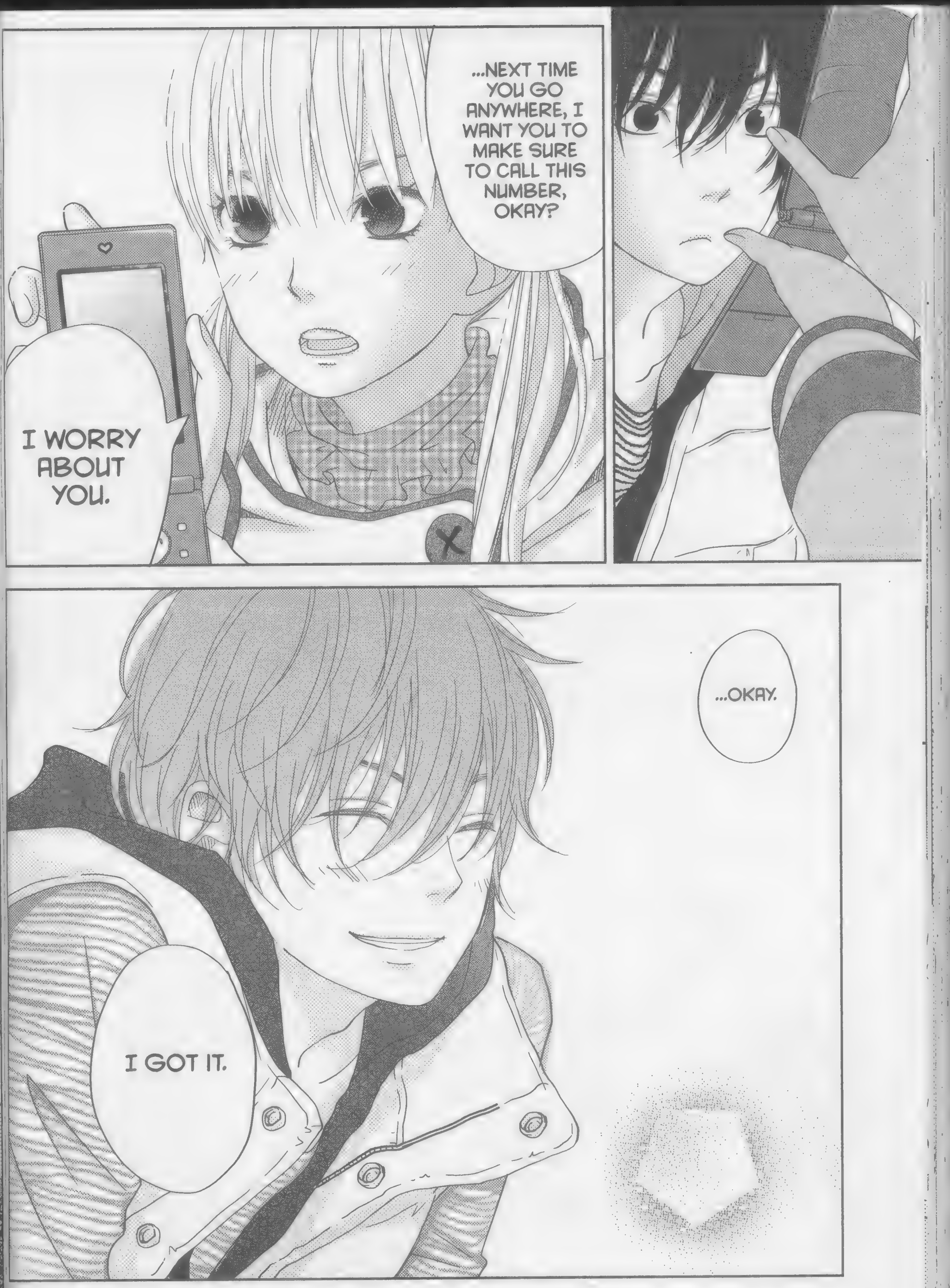

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS COMMON ENGLISH TEST QUESTIONS [REVISED 6TH EDITION] ROBIKOSHA
ROBIKOSHA
HERE'S THE BOOK I TOLD YOU ABOUT.
?
YOU CAN TAKE IT.
DAMMIT.
IT'S OVER ALREADY?
?
AND NOW
I HAD THE WHOLE DAY ALONE WITH HER,
WITH NO ONE GETTING BETWEEN US.
THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE.

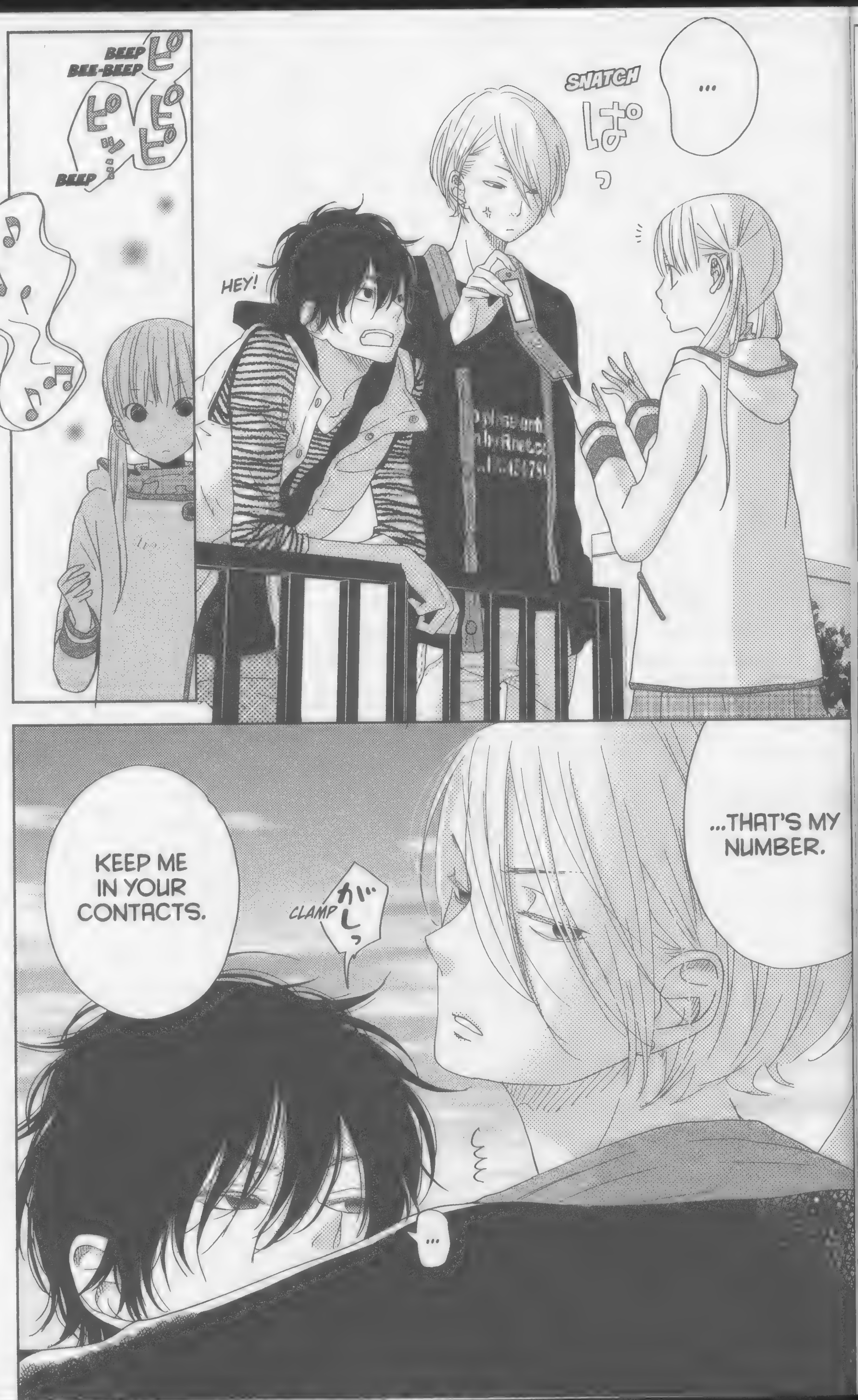

I—
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HARU.
YO, SHIZUKU.
LONG TIME NO SEE.
ONSEN MANJU

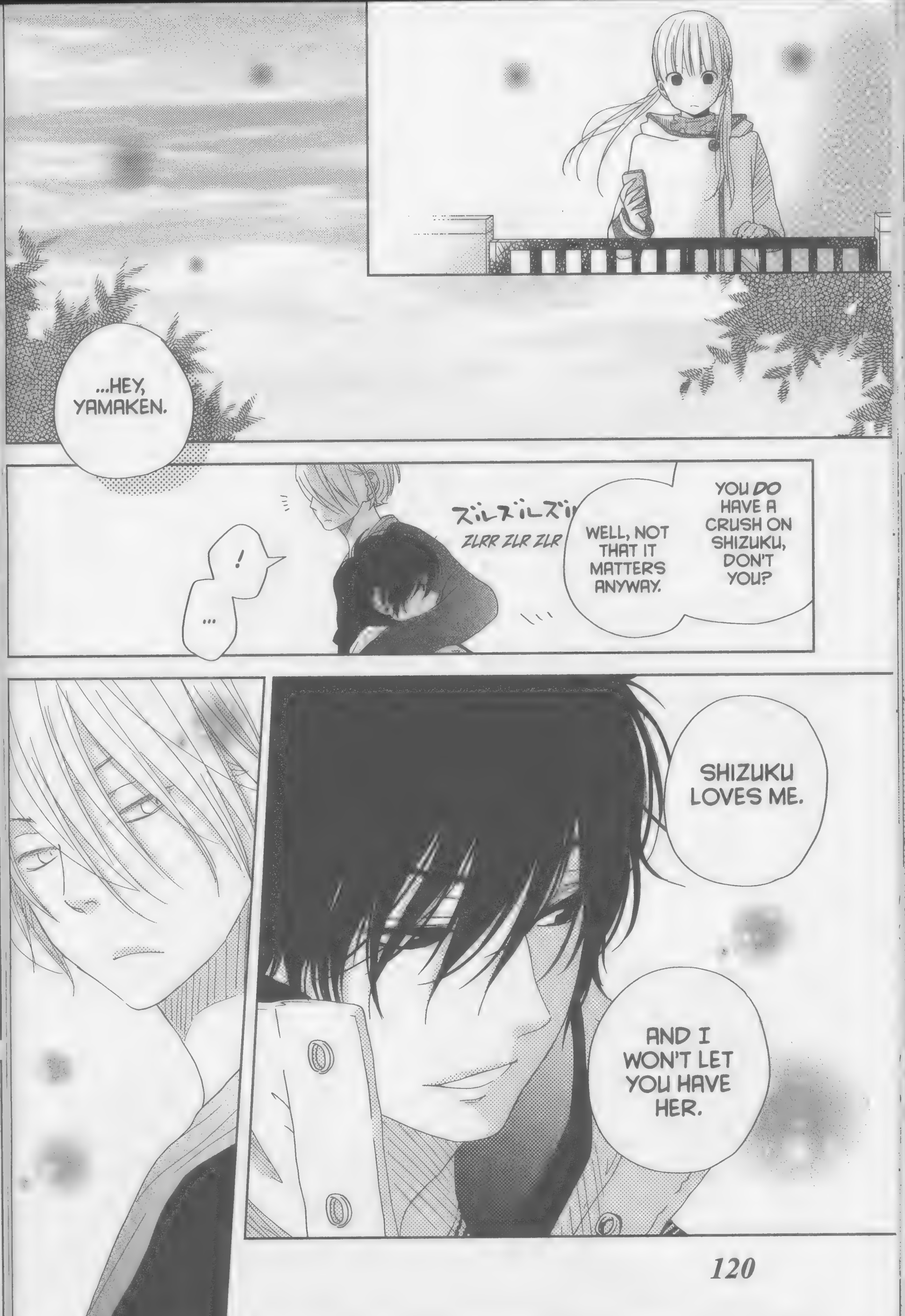

...
I THOUGHT YOU WENT TO STAY WITH YOUR FAMILY. I CALLED.
WOW, HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT?
I JUST GOT BACK.
I FORGOT MY PHONE AT MY HOUSE.
I GOT YOU THESE MANJU AS A SOUVENIR.
...
GET YOUR HAND OFF HER.
CHOP
...
SWISH
...YAMA-KEN-KUN.
WHY DO YOU START ACTING THIS WAY THE SECOND HARU SHOWS UP?
...WHY INDEED.
IF HE WAS GOING TO COME BY...
HE COULD HAVE SAID SOMETHING.
...OH WELL.
HE'S BACK NOW.
SO THAT'S GOOD.
MANJU...
OH, HI THERE. I HAVE A DELIVERY.

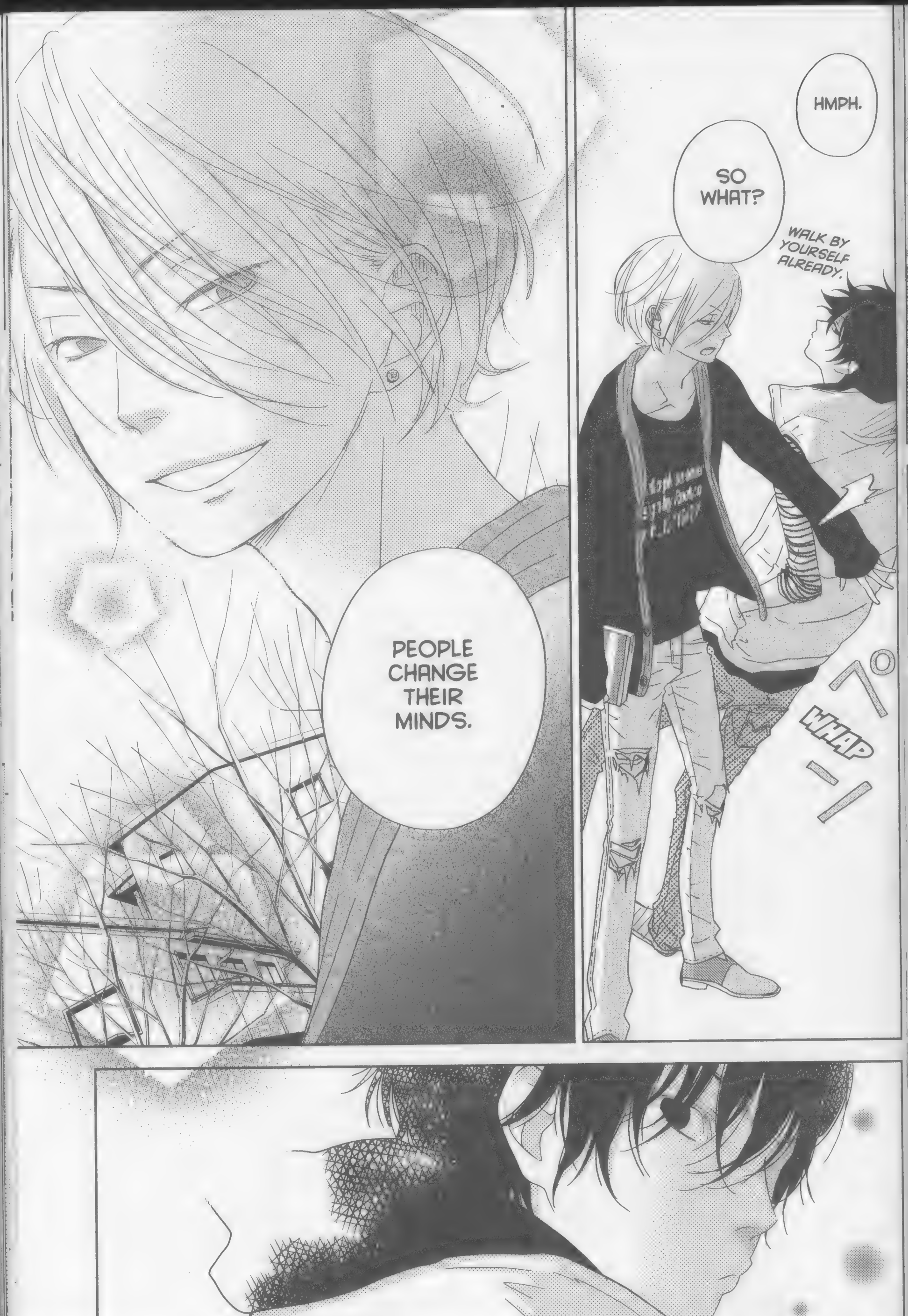

SIGN HERE, PLEASE.
? A PACKAGE?
THANK YOU.
I WONDER WHO SENT IT.
ギャア RAR
ギャア RAR
HAVE A NICE DAY!
!
MOM!
ガッ GRAB
HARU, YAMAKEN-KUN.
I'LL SEE YOU LATER. 'BYE.
バタン SHUT
...
HOLD IT.
ガッ GRAB
♪
ガシャン CLANK
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE GOING INSIDE WHILE HER PARENTS AREN'T HOME.
AH? I'M GONNA EAT SOME MANJU! DON'T TRY AND STOP ME!
ぐぐ GH GH...

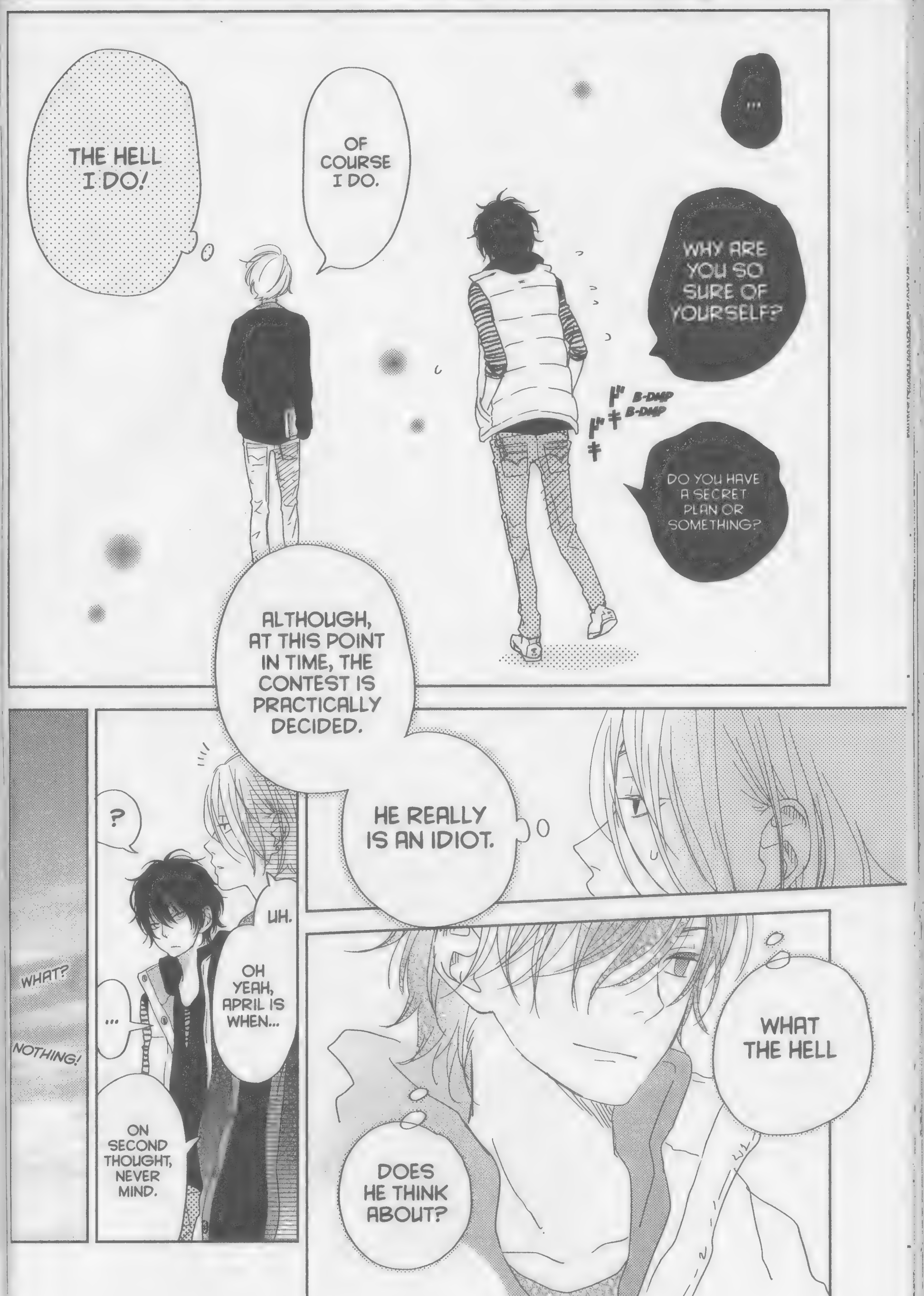

ARE YOU STUPID?!! YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!
LET GO! I'M ALLOWED!
YOU. ARE. COMING. WITH. ME!!
HARU!
バーン BAM
ズル ZLRR
ズル ZLRR
ズル ZLRR
M-MY MOM JUST
SENT ME A CELL PHONE!!
Dear Shizuku,
A girl in love needs her privacy.
Your mother will pay for it, so use it as much as you like.
And please tell your father that if he doesn't find a new job by the end of the month, I'll put a hole in him.
Love, Mom
ピ BEEP
ピ BEEP
HOW DO I KNOW MY NUMBER?
WHOA, IT'S PINK!
TRY THAT.
OH, THIS?
...FOR SOMEONE WHO SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT ONE,
SHE'S AWFULLY EXCITED.
HARU!
LEARN IT!

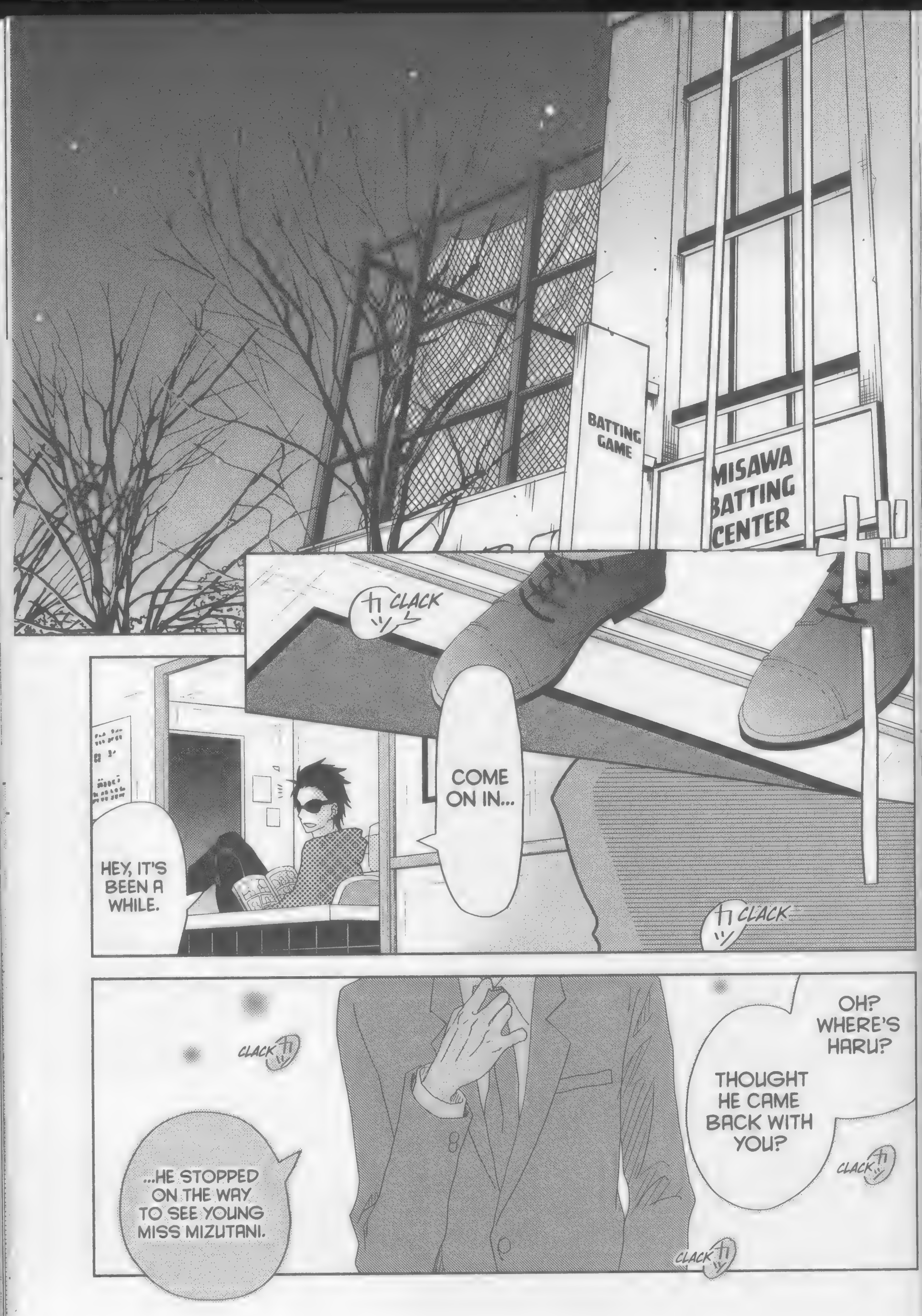

...NEXT TIME YOU GO ANYWHERE, I WANT YOU TO MAKE SURE TO CALL THIS NUMBER, OKAY?
I WORRY ABOUT YOU.
...OKAY.
I GOT IT.

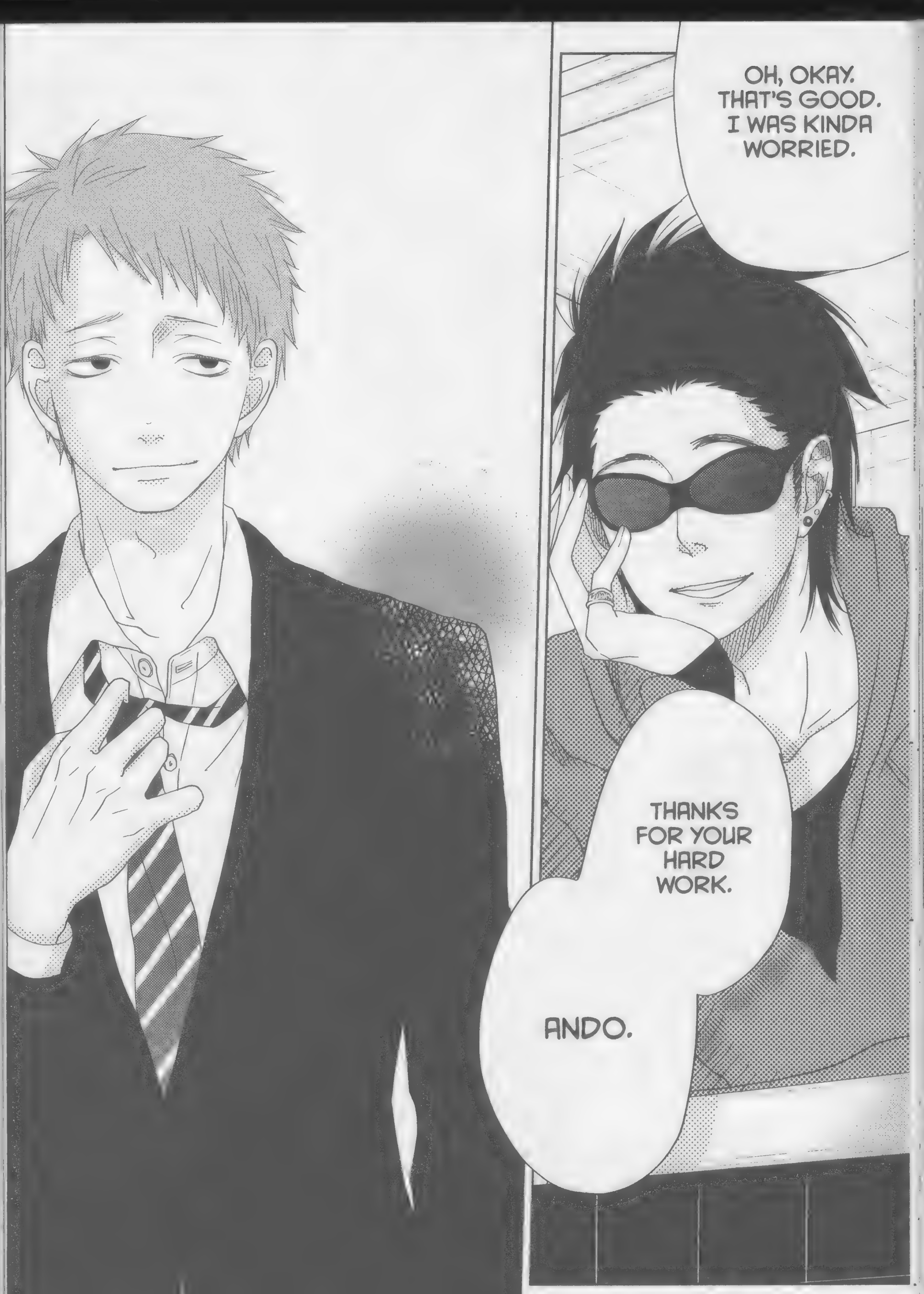

...
SNATCH
ぱっ
HEY!
BEEP
BEE-BEEP
BEEP
ピ
ピッ
ピ
ピッ
...THAT'S MY NUMBER.
KEEP ME IN YOUR CONTACTS.
CLAMP
がしっ
...


...HEY, YAMAKEN.
YOU *DO* HAVE A CRUSH ON SHIZUKU, DON'T YOU?
WELL, NOT THAT IT MATTERS ANYWAY.
ズルズルズリ
ZLRR ZLR ZLR
!
...
SHIZUKU LOVES ME.
AND I WON'T LET YOU HAVE HER.

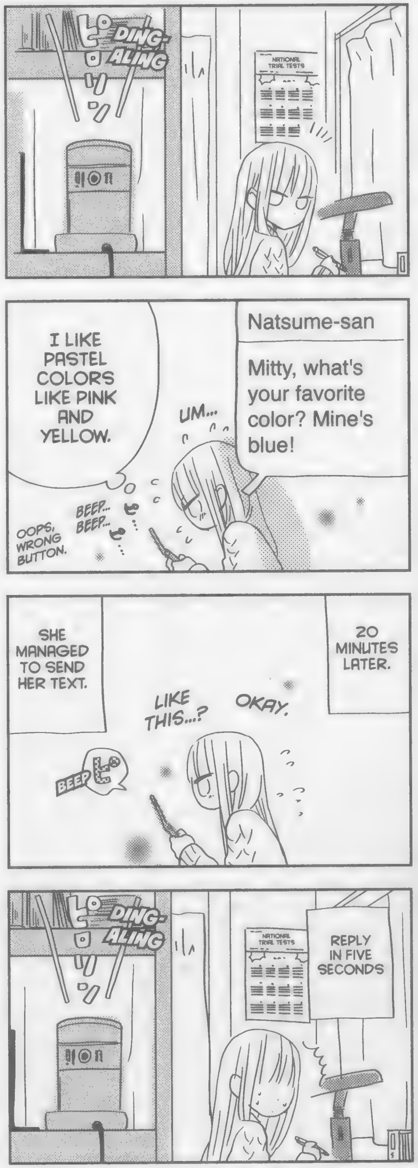

HMPH.
SO WHAT?
WALK BY YOURSELF ALREADY.
ペ
WHAP
PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR MINDS.


...
WHY ARE YOU SO SURE OF YOURSELF?
DO YOU HAVE A SECRET PLAN OR SOMETHING?
ドキ B-DMP
ドキ B-DMP
OF COURSE I DO.
THE HELL I DO!
ALTHOUGH, AT THIS POINT IN TIME, THE CONTEST IS PRACTICALLY DECIDED.
HE REALLY IS AN IDIOT.
?
UH.
OH YEAH, APRIL IS WHEN...
...
ON SECOND THOUGHT, NEVER MIND.
WHAT?
NOTHING!
WHAT THE HELL
DOES HE THINK ABOUT?

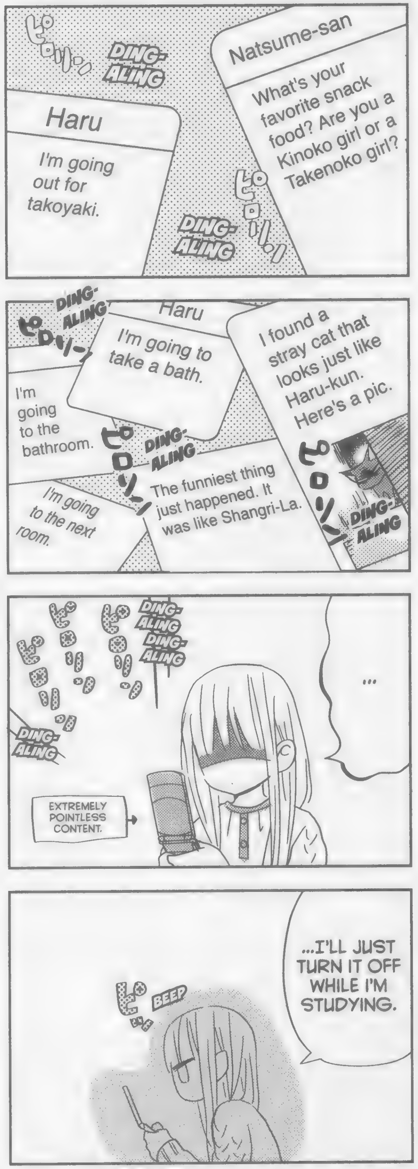

BATTING GAME
MISAWA BATTING CENTER
ガッ
カッ CLACK
COME ON IN...
HEY, IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
カッ CLACK
OH? WHERE'S HARU?
THOUGHT HE CAME BACK WITH YOU?
CLACK カッ
CLACK カッ
...HE STOPPED ON THE WAY TO SEE YOUNG MISS MIZUTANI.
CLACK カッ


OH, OKAY. THAT'S GOOD. I WAS KINDA WORRIED.
THANKS FOR YOUR HARD WORK.
ANDO.

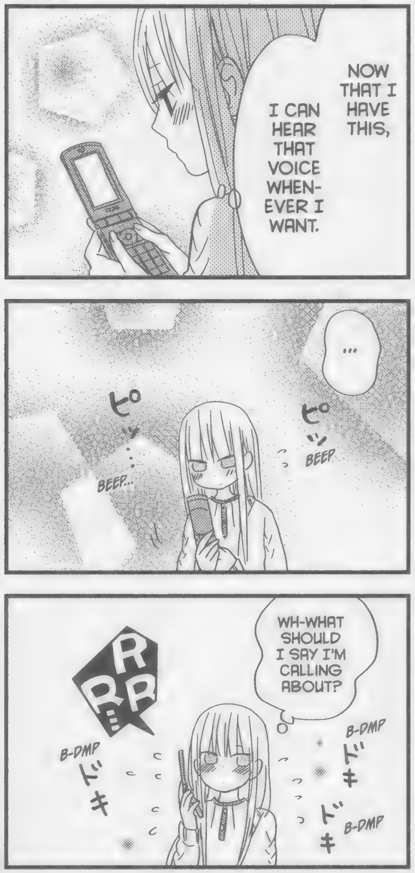
TEXTING

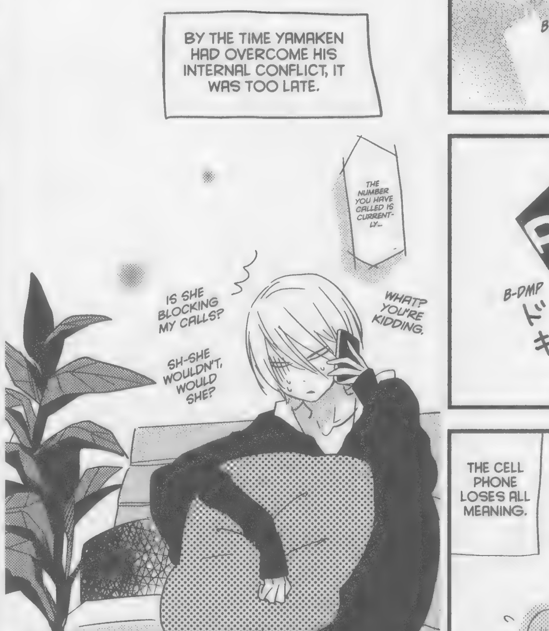

DING-ALING
NATIONAL TRIAL TESTS
Natsume-san
Mitty, what's your favorite color? Mine's blue!
I LIKE PASTEL COLORS LIKE PINK AND YELLOW.
UM...
BEEP... BEEP...
OOPS, WRONG BUTTON.
20 MINUTES LATER.
SHE MANAGED TO SEND HER TEXT.
OKAY.
LIKE THIS...?
BEEP
REPLY IN FIVE SECONDS
DING-ALING
NATIONAL TRIAL TESTS

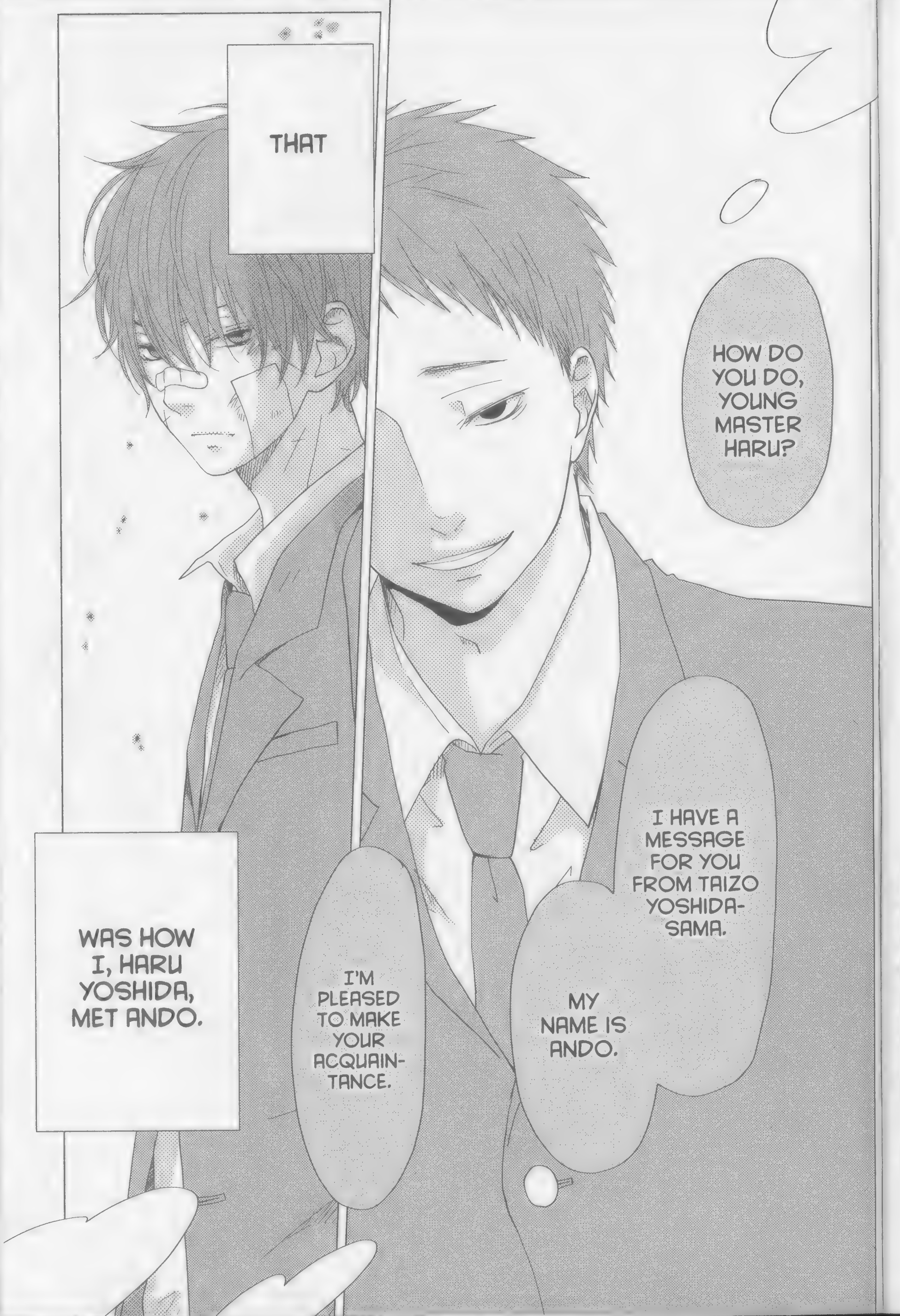
HINDRANCE


Natsume-san
What's your favorite snack food? Are you a Kinoko girl or a Takenoko girl?
DING-ALING
Haru
I'm going out for takoyaki.
DING-ALING
I found a stray cat that looks just like Haru-kun. Here's a pic.
Haru
I'm going to take a bath.
DING-ALING
I'm going to the bathroom.
DING-ALING
The funniest thing just happened. It was like Shangri-La.
I'm going to the next room.
DING-ALING
...
DING-ALING
DING-ALING
DING-ALING
EXTREMELY POINTLESS CONTENT.
...I'LL JUST TURN IT OFF WHILE I'M STUDYING.
BEEP

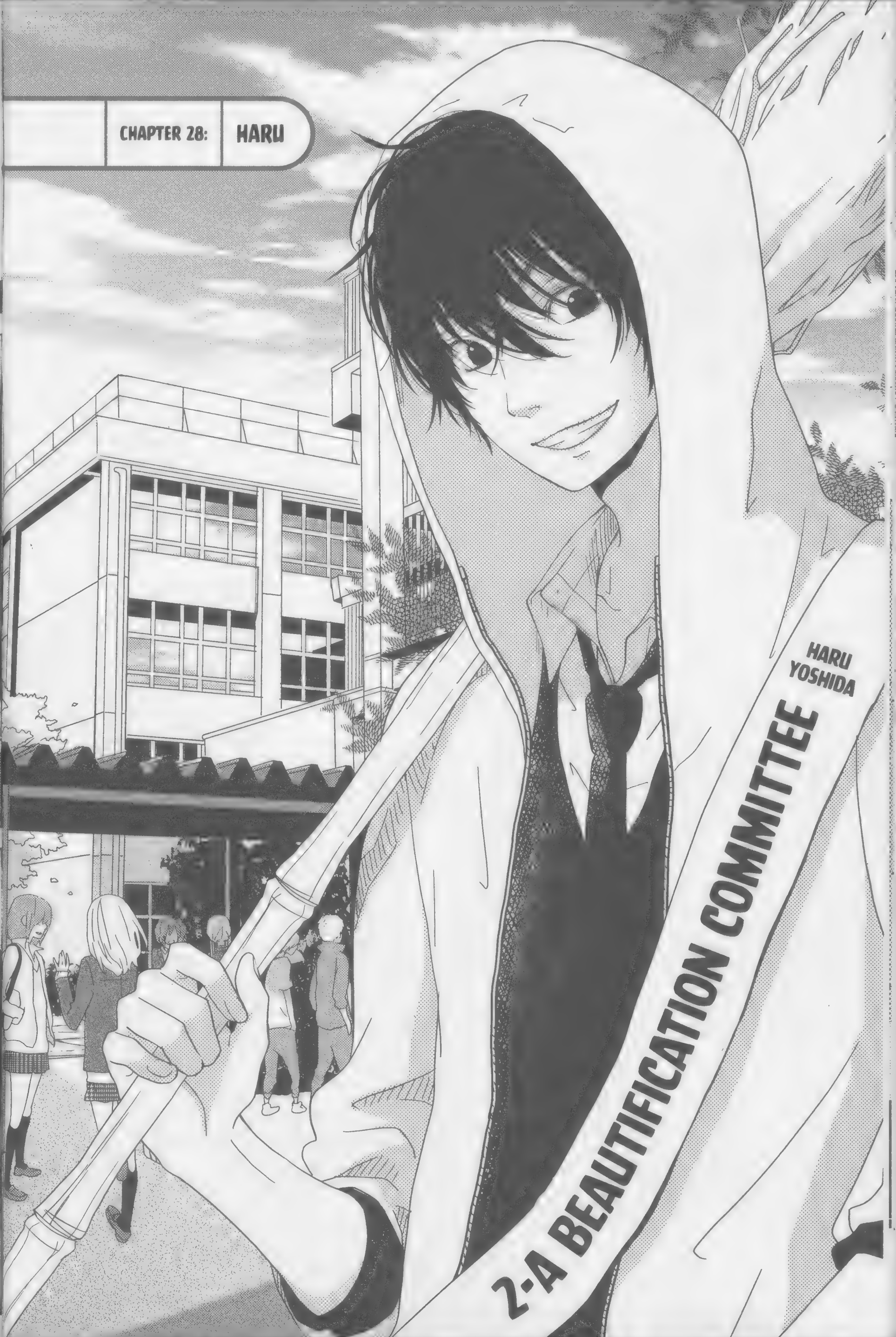
VOICE

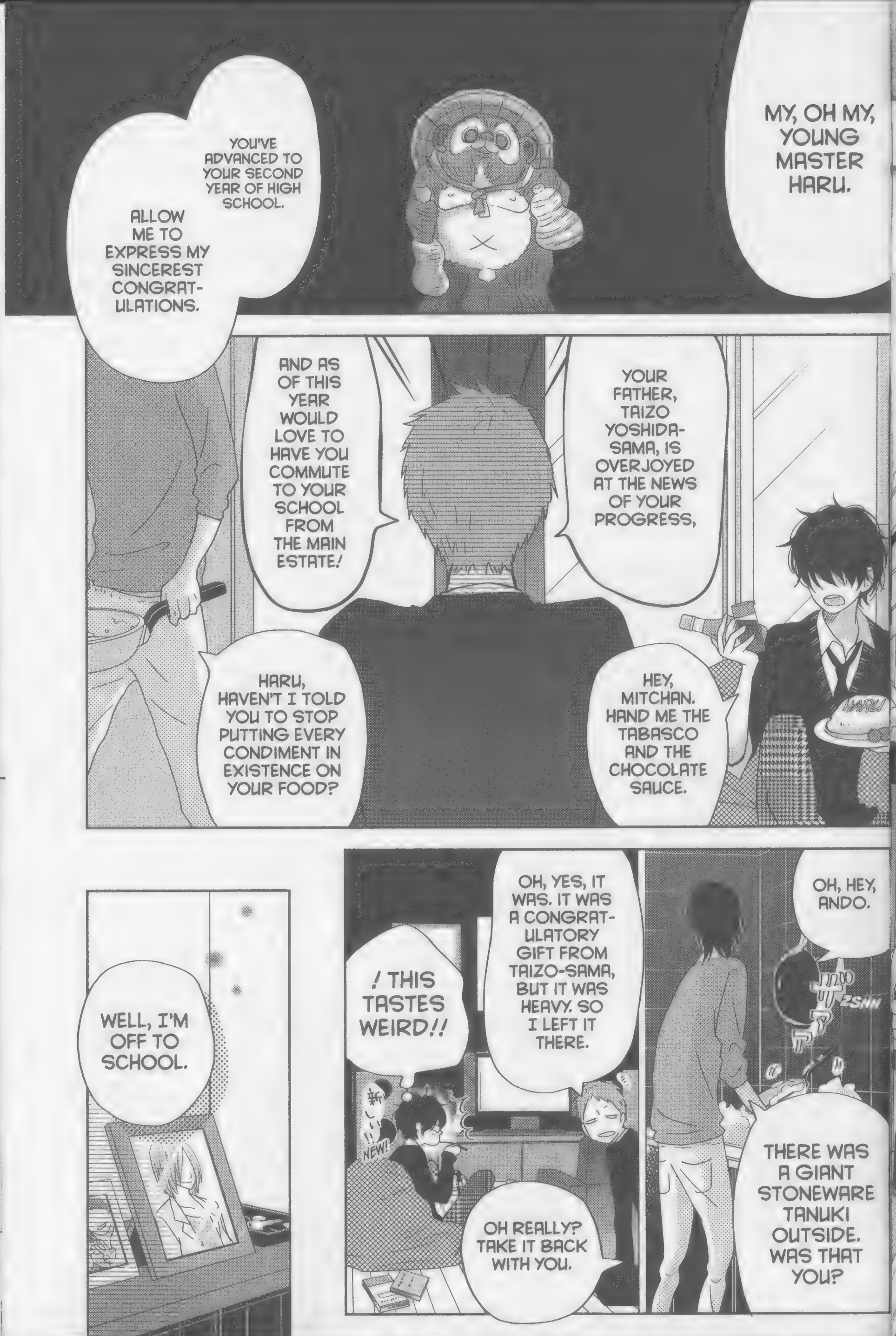

NOW THAT I HAVE THIS,
I CAN HEAR THAT VOICE WHENEVER I WANT.
...
ピッ BEEP
ピッ... BEEP...
WH-WHAT SHOULD I SAY I'M CALLING ABOUT?
RRR
ドキ B-DMP
ドキ B-DMP
ドキ B-DMP
...UH, MOM?
UM, THIS IS SHIZUKU. I'M GOING TO TURN MY PHONE OFF WHEN I'M AT HOME OR SCHOOL, SO IF YOU NEED ME, CALL THE HOUSE.
THE CELL PHONE LOSES ALL MEANING.

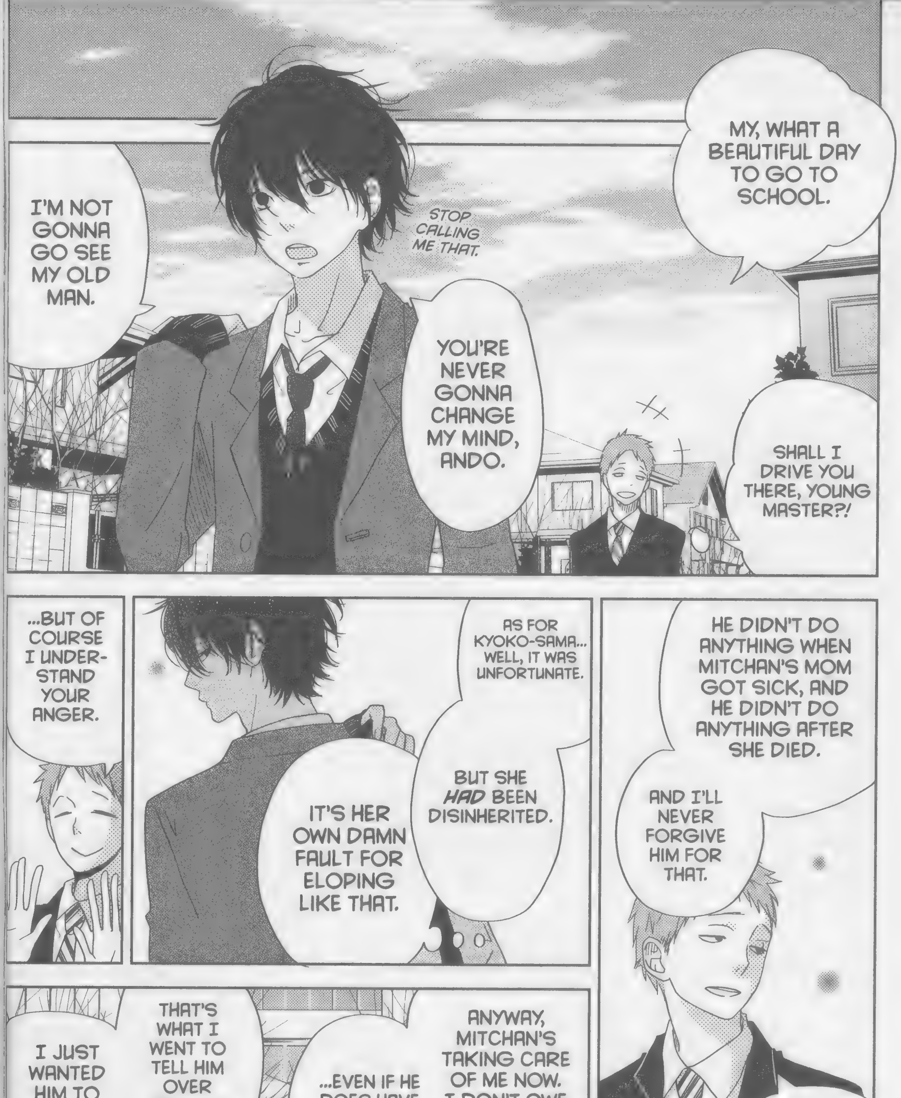

BY THE TIME YAMAKEN HAD OVERCOME HIS INTERNAL CONFLICT, IT WAS TOO LATE.
THE NUMBER YOU HAVE CALLED IS CURRENTLY...
WHAT? YOU'RE KIDDING.
IS SHE BLOCKING MY CALLS?
SH-SHE WOULDN'T, WOULD SHE?

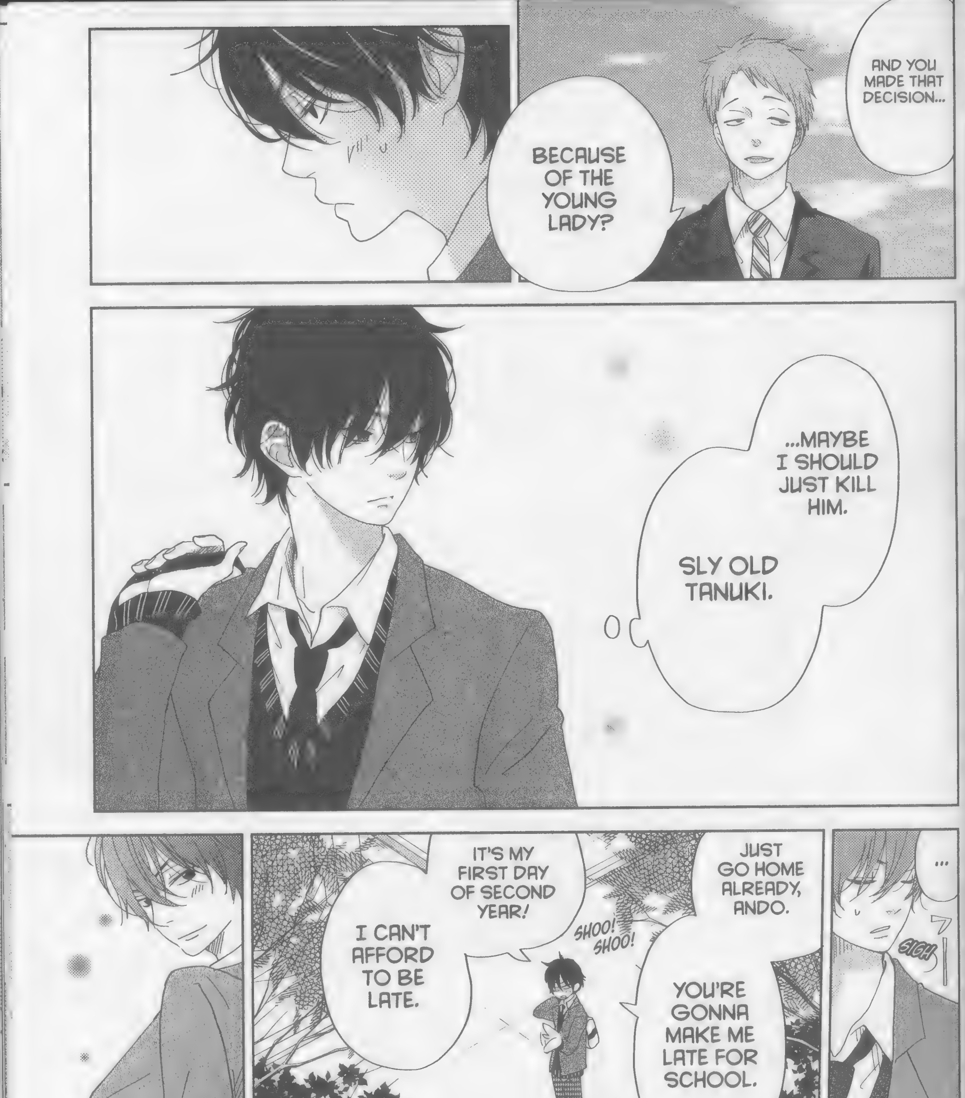

THAT
HOW DO YOU DO, YOUNG MASTER HARU?
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU FROM TAIZO YOSHIDA-SAMA.
MY NAME IS ANDO.
I'M PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
WAS HOW I, HARU YOSHIDA, MET ANDO.

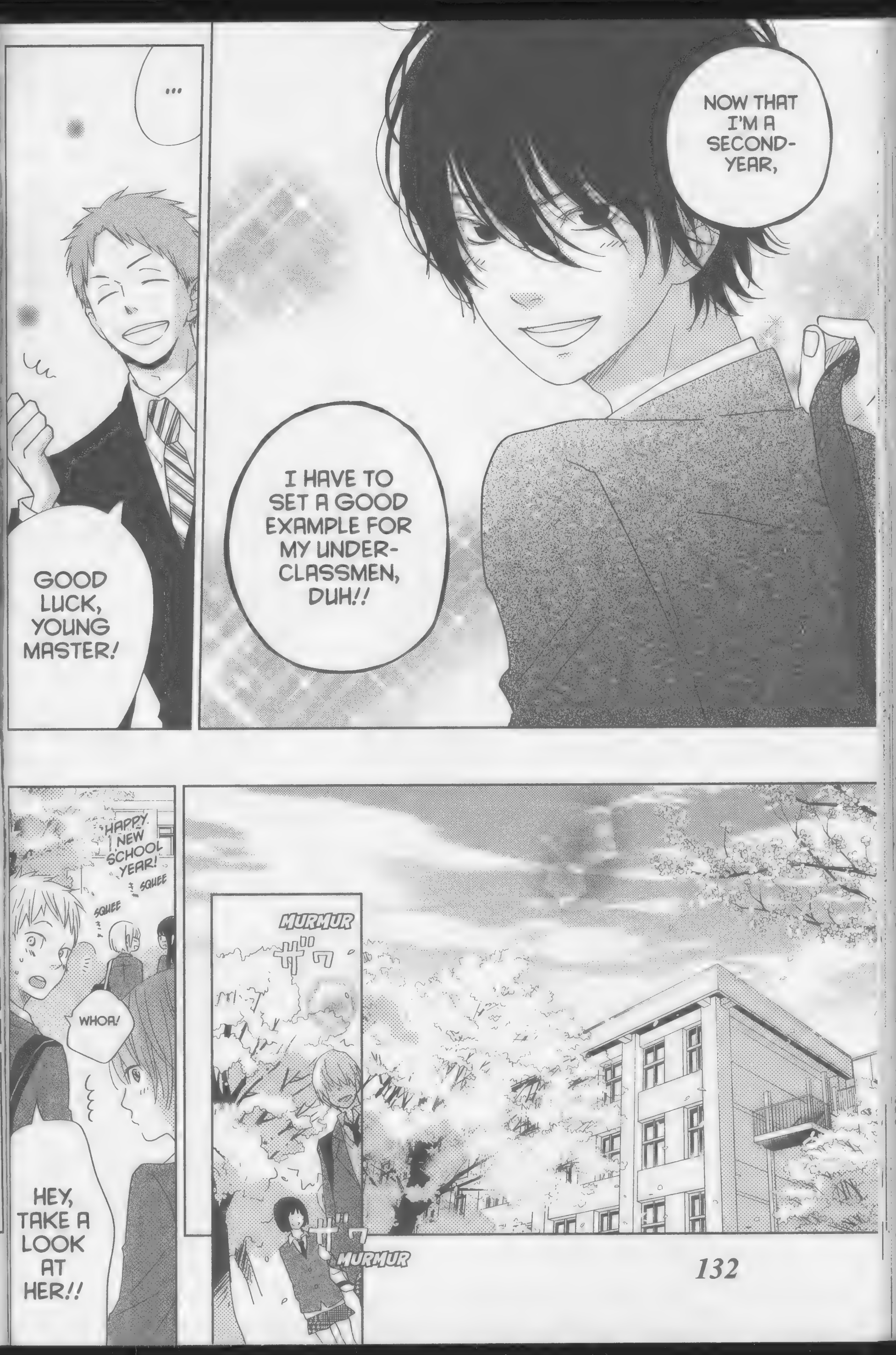
CHAPTER 28: HARU

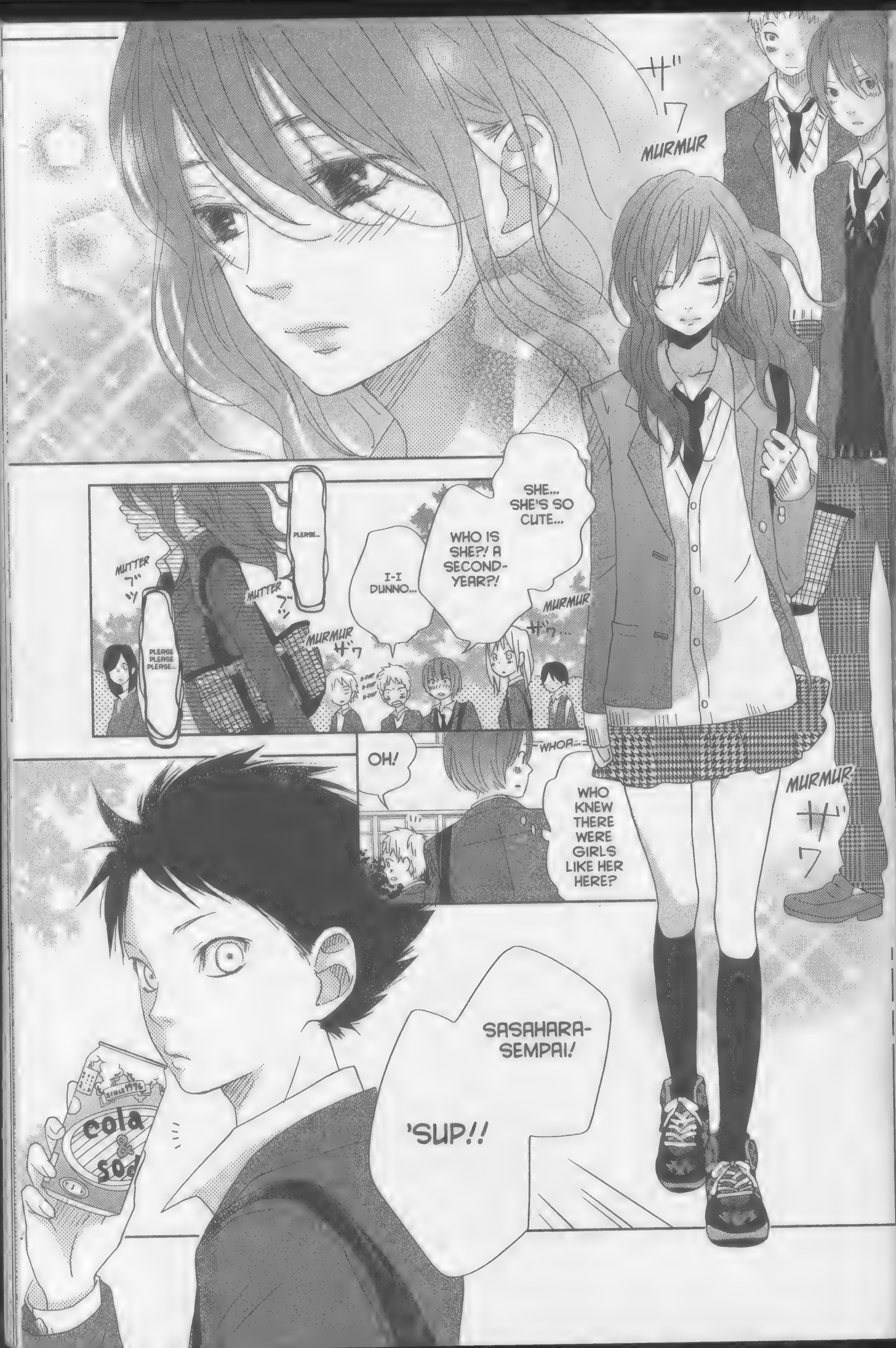

HARU YOSHIDA
2-A BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

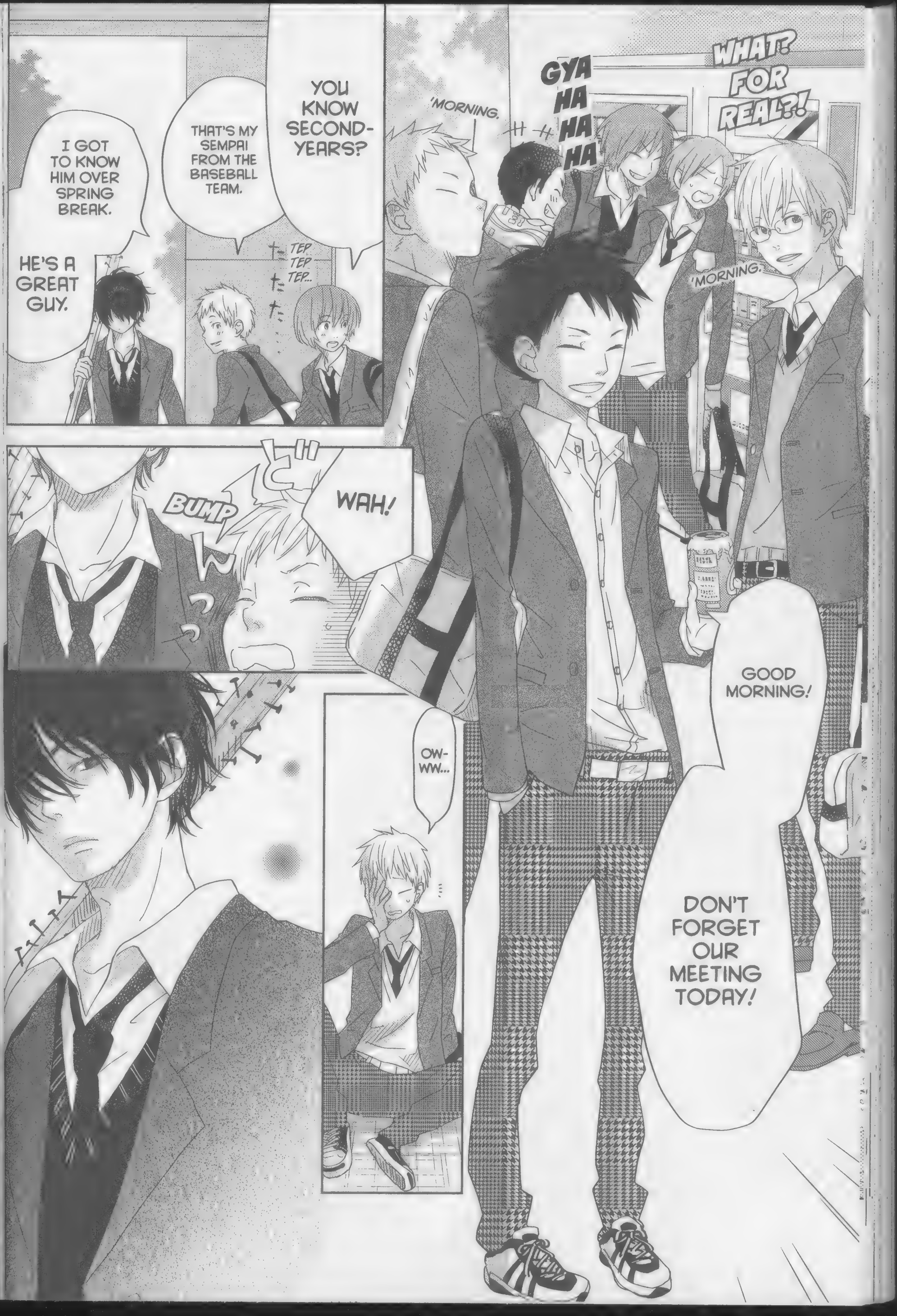

MY, OH MY, YOUNG MASTER HARU.
YOU'VE ADVANCED TO YOUR SECOND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.
ALLOW ME TO EXPRESS MY SINCEREST CONGRATULATIONS.
YOUR FATHER, TAIZO YOSHIDA-SAMA, IS OVERJOYED AT THE NEWS OF YOUR PROGRESS,
AND AS OF THIS YEAR WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU COMMUTE TO YOUR SCHOOL FROM THE MAIN ESTATE!
HEY, MITCHAN. HAND ME THE TABASCO AND THE CHOCOLATE SAUCE.
HARU
HARU, HAVEN'T I TOLD YOU TO STOP PUTTING EVERY CONDIMENT IN EXISTENCE ON YOUR FOOD?
OH, HEY, ANDO.
ZSHH
THERE WAS A GIANT STONEWARE TANUKI OUTSIDE. WAS THAT YOU?
OH, YES, IT WAS. IT WAS A CONGRATULATORY GIFT FROM TAIZO-SAMA, BUT IT WAS HEAVY. SO I LEFT IT THERE.
! THIS TASTES WEIRD!!
新しい!!
NEW!
OH REALLY? TAKE IT BACK WITH YOU.
WELL, I'M OFF TO SCHOOL.

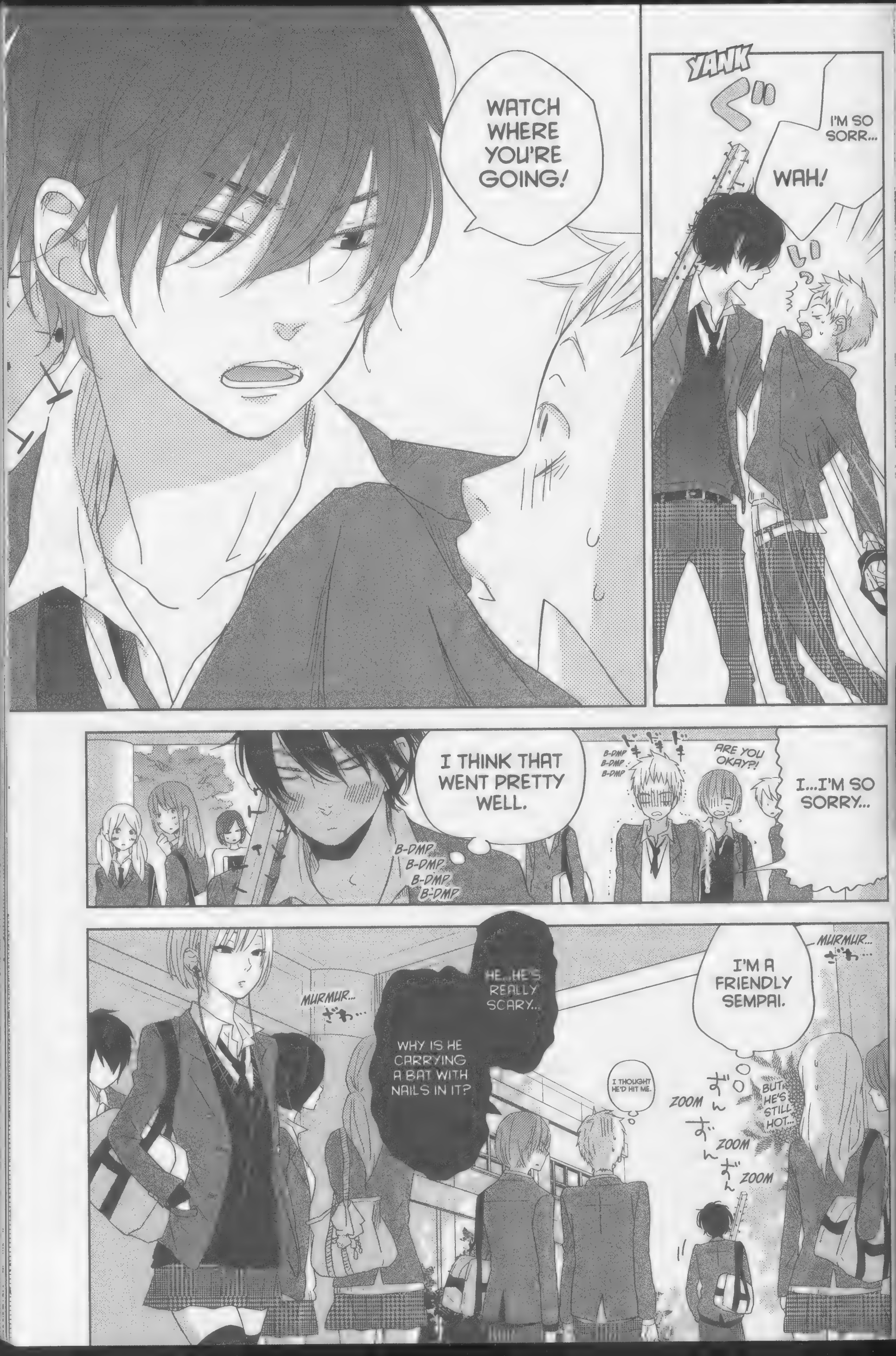

MY, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY TO GO TO SCHOOL.
SHALL I DRIVE YOU THERE, YOUNG MASTER?!
STOP CALLING ME THAT.
I'M NOT GONNA GO SEE MY OLD MAN.
YOU'RE NEVER GONNA CHANGE MY MIND, ANDO.
...YOUR FATHER WANTS YOU TO COME BACK HOME.
HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WHEN MITCHAN'S MOM GOT SICK, AND HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING AFTER SHE DIED.
AND I'LL NEVER FORGIVE HIM FOR THAT.
AS FOR KYOKO-SAMA... WELL, IT WAS UNFORTUNATE.
BUT SHE *HAD* BEEN DISINHERITED.
IT'S HER OWN DAMN FAULT FOR ELOPING LIKE THAT.
...BUT OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER.
ANYWAY, MITCHAN'S TAKING CARE OF ME NOW. I DON'T OWE IT TO MY DAD TO GO SEE HIM.
...EVEN IF HE DOES HAVE GOOD TASTE IN GIFTS.
WHOA, HE LIKED THAT?
THAT'S WHAT I WENT TO TELL HIM OVER SPRING BREAK.
I JUST WANTED HIM TO KNOW THAT I'M GONNA STAY HERE, SO STOP BUTTING IN.

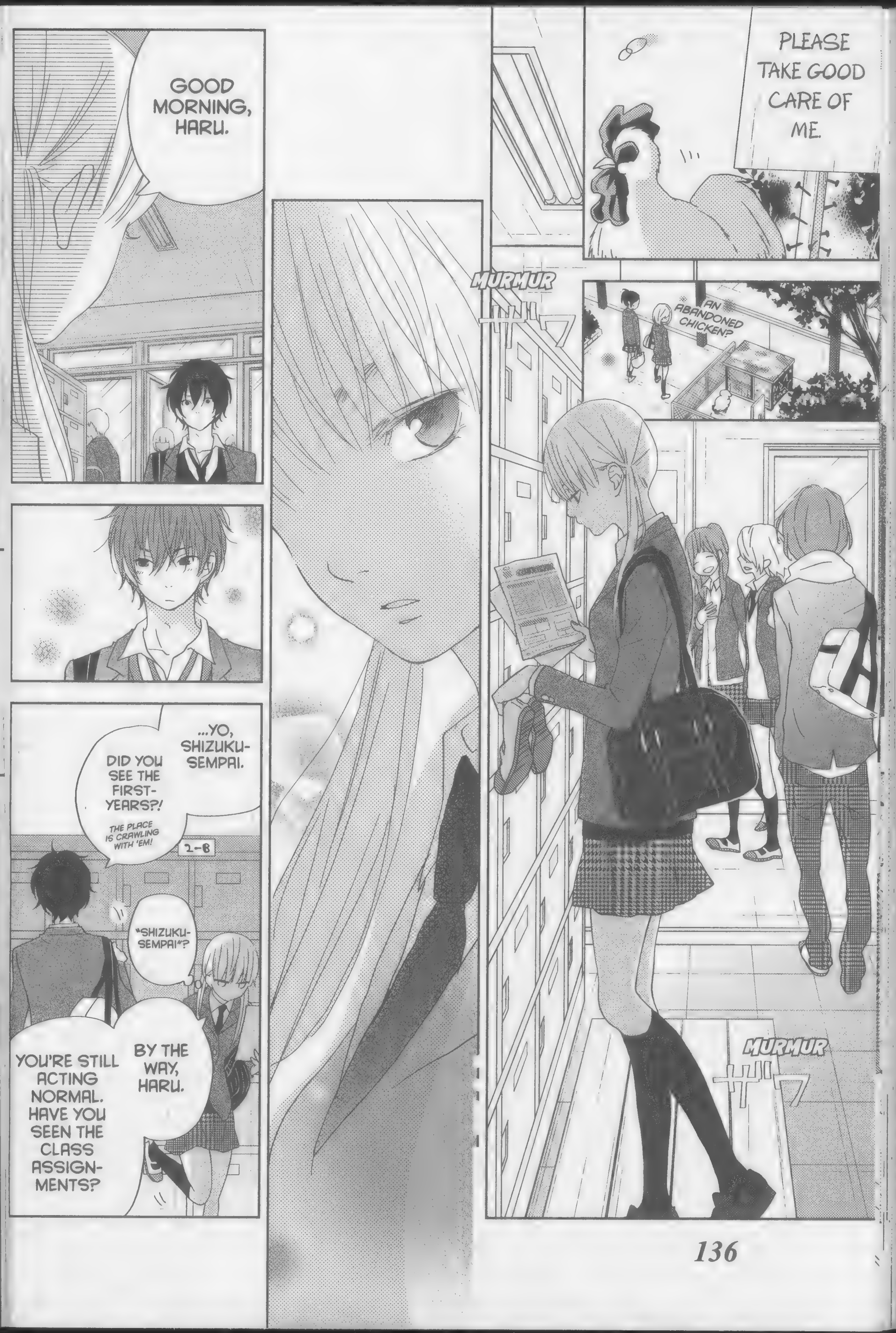

AND YOU MADE THAT DECISION...
BECAUSE OF THE YOUNG LADY?
...MAYBE I SHOULD JUST KILL HIM.
SLY OLD TANUKI.
...
SIGH
JUST GO HOME ALREADY, ANDO.
YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME LATE FOR SCHOOL.
SHOO! SHOO!
HA HA HA, LATE?
I HARDLY EXPECTED YOU TO BE SO RESPONSIBLE, YOUNG MASTER.
IT'S MY FIRST DAY OF SECOND YEAR!
I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE LATE.
IS THERE SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT BEING A SECOND-YEAR?

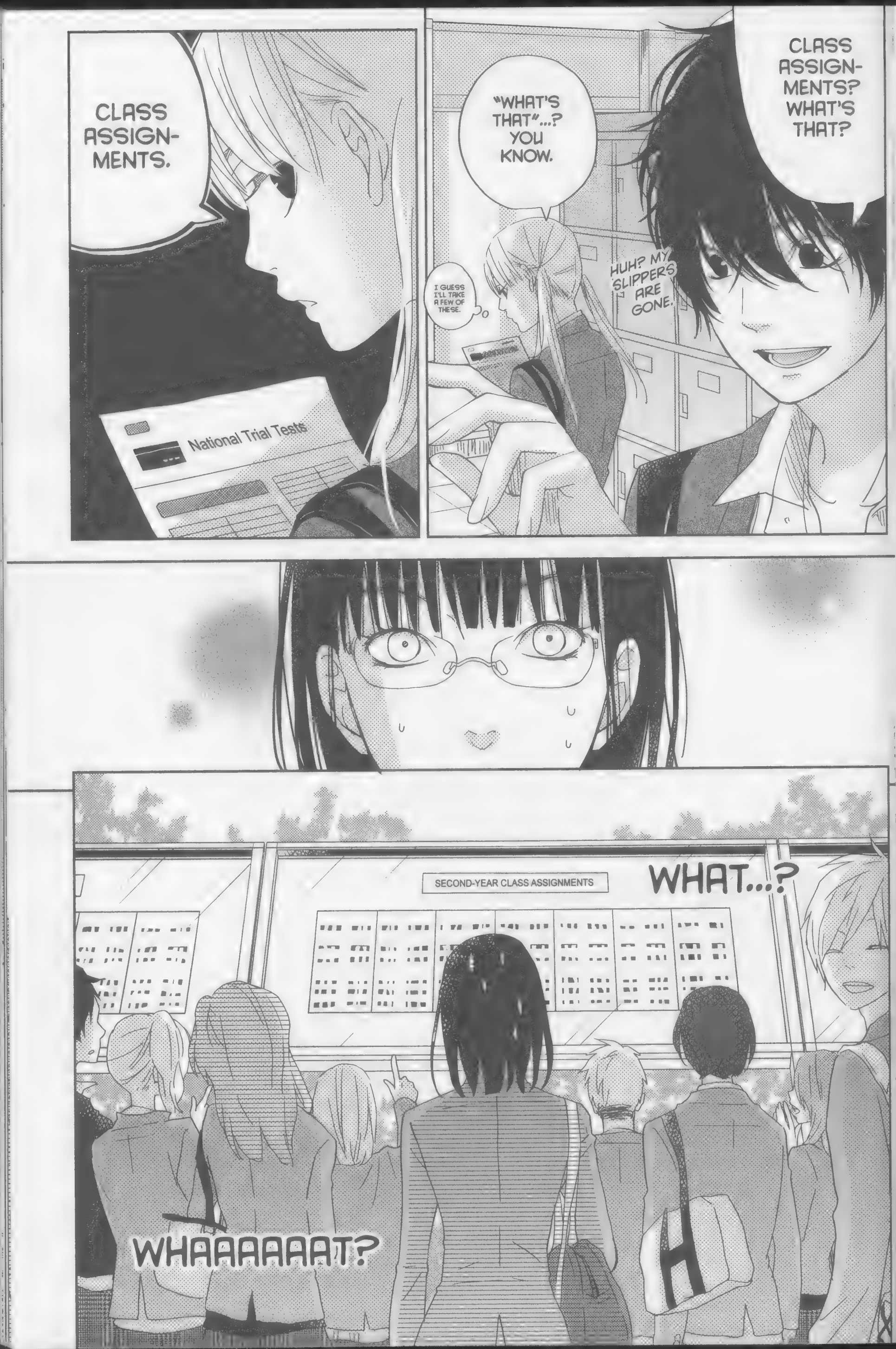

NOW THAT I'M A SECOND-YEAR,
I HAVE TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR MY UNDERCLASSMEN, DUH!!
...
GOOD LUCK, YOUNG MASTER!
MURMUR
ザワ
MURMUR
ザワ
HAPPY NEW SCHOOL YEAR!
SQUEE
SQUEE
WHOA!
HEY, TAKE A LOOK AT HER!!

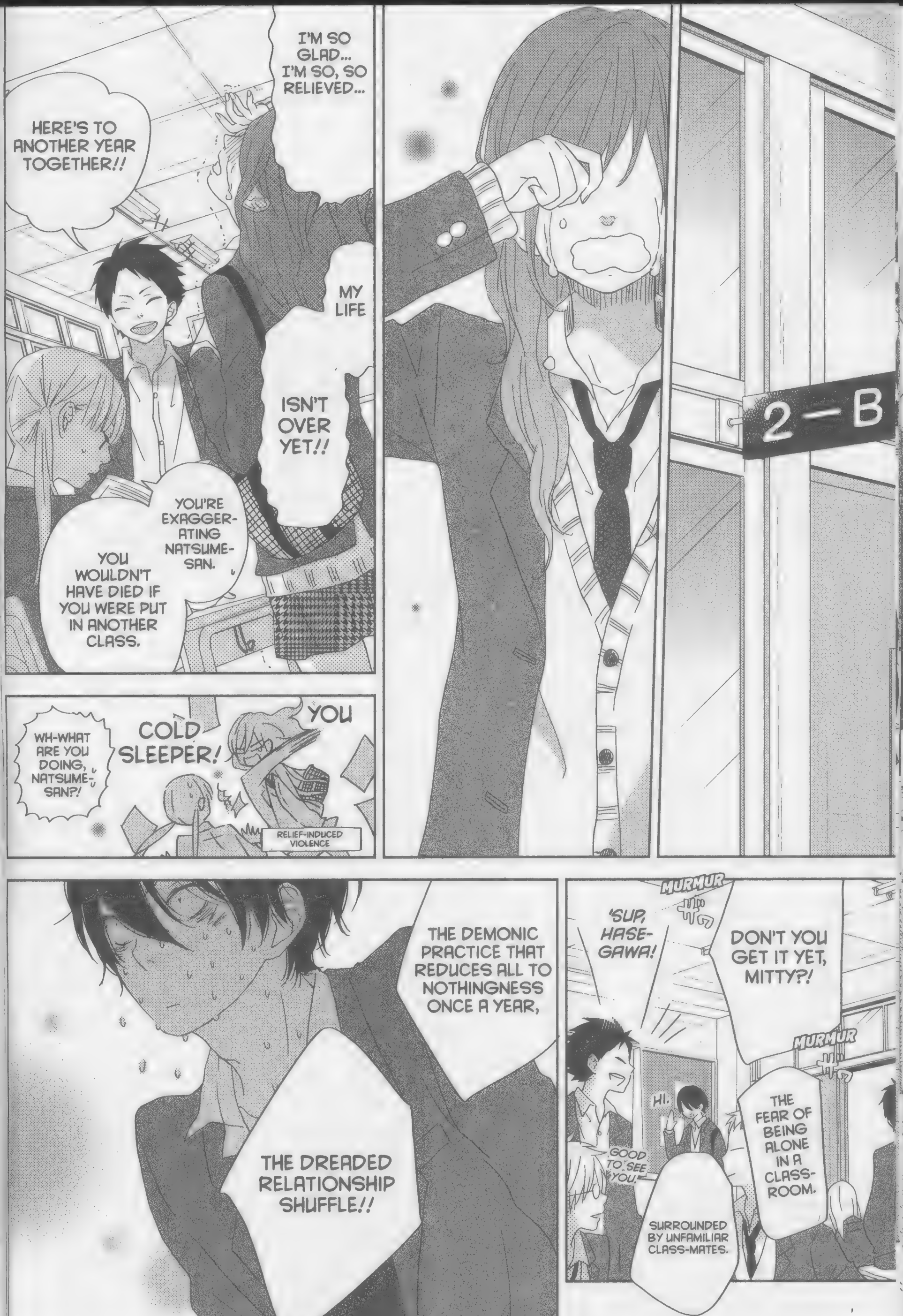

ザワ
MURMUR
SHE... SHE'S SO CUTE...
WHO IS SHE?! A SECOND-YEAR?!
I-I DUNNO...
PLEASE...
PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE...
MUTTER
ブツ
MUTTER
ブツ
MURMUR
ザワ
MURMUR
ザワ
WHOA...
OH!
WHO KNEW THERE WERE GIRLS LIKE HER HERE?
MURMUR
ザワ
SASAHARA-SEMPAI!
'SUP!!
since 1976
cola
&
soda

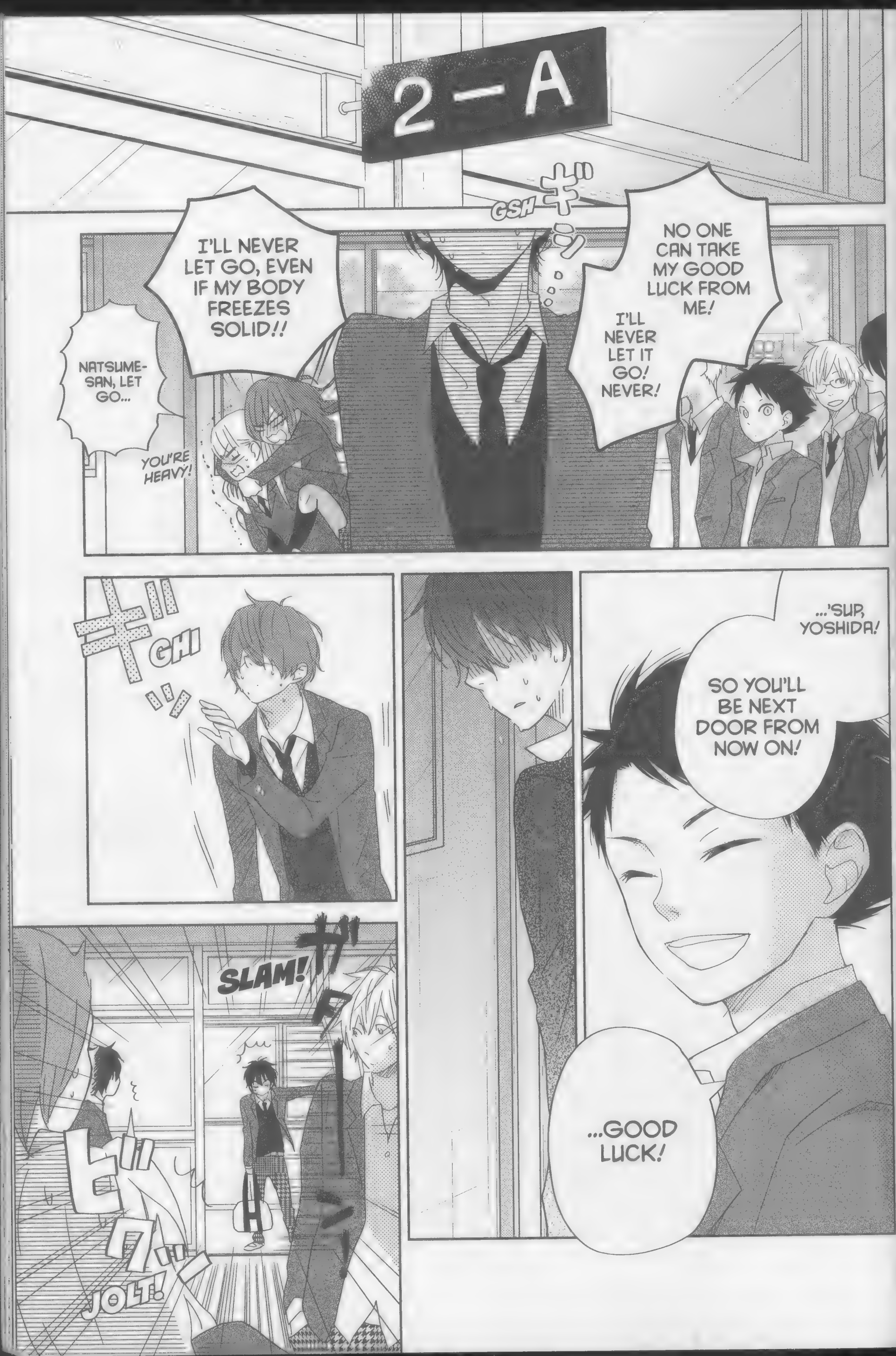

WHAT? FOR REAL?!
GYA HA HA HA
'MORNING.
'MORNING.
GOOD MORNING!
DON'T FORGET OUR MEETING TODAY!
YOU KNOW SECOND-YEARS?
THAT'S MY SEMPAI FROM THE BASEBALL TEAM.
TEP TEP TEP...
たたた
I GOT TO KNOW HIM OVER SPRING BREAK.
HE'S A GREAT GUY.
WAH!
ど
BUMP
ん
OW-WW...

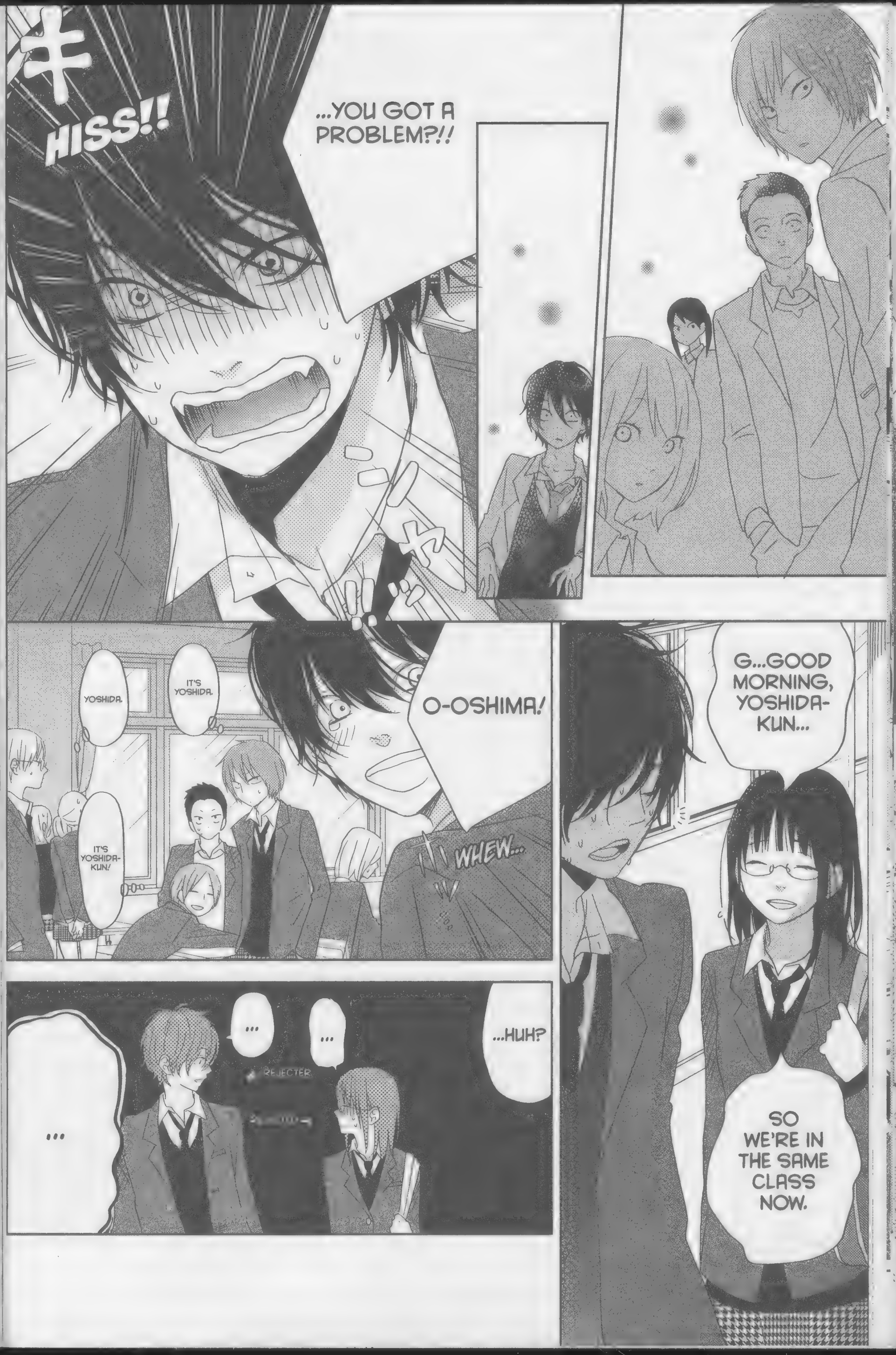

YANK
ぐい
I'M SO SORR...
WAH!
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
I...I'M SO SORRY...
ARE YOU OKAY?!
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
I THINK THAT WENT PRETTY WELL.
B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP B-DMP
MURMUR... ざわ…
I'M A FRIENDLY SEMPAI.
HE...HE'S REALLY SCARY...
WHY IS HE CARRYING A BAT WITH NAILS IN IT?
MURMUR... ざわ…
I THOUGHT HE'D HIT ME.
BUT... HE'S STILL HOT...
ZOOM ずん ZOOM ずん ZOOM ずん ZOOM

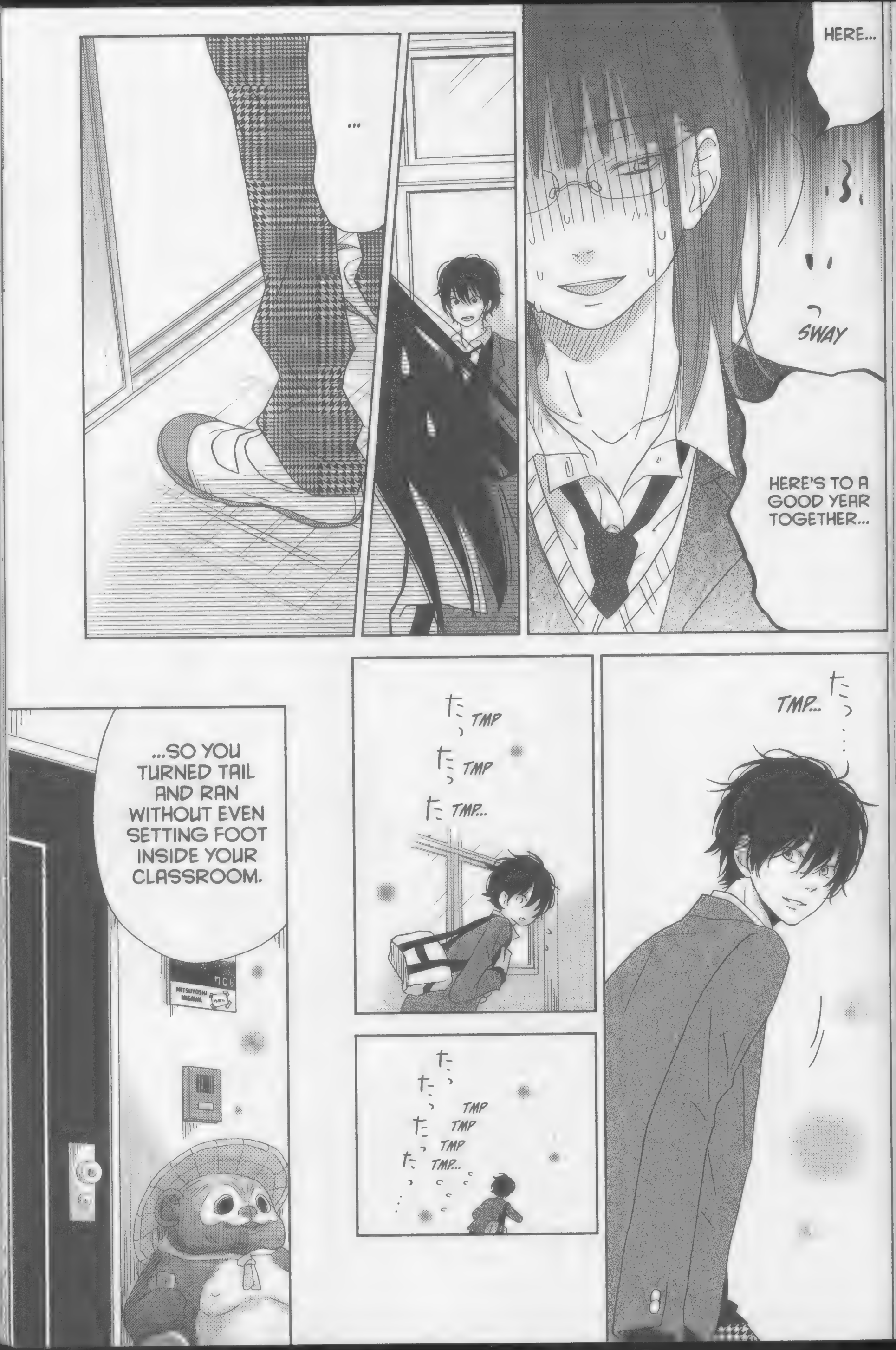

PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF ME.
AN ABANDONED CHICKEN?
MURMUR
MURMUR
GOOD MORNING, HARU.
...YO, SHIZUKU-SEMPAI.
DID YOU SEE THE FIRST-YEARS?! THE PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH 'EM!
2-8
"SHIZUKU-SEMPAI"?
BY THE WAY, HARU.
YOU'RE STILL ACTING NORMAL. HAVE YOU SEEN THE CLASS ASSIGNMENTS?

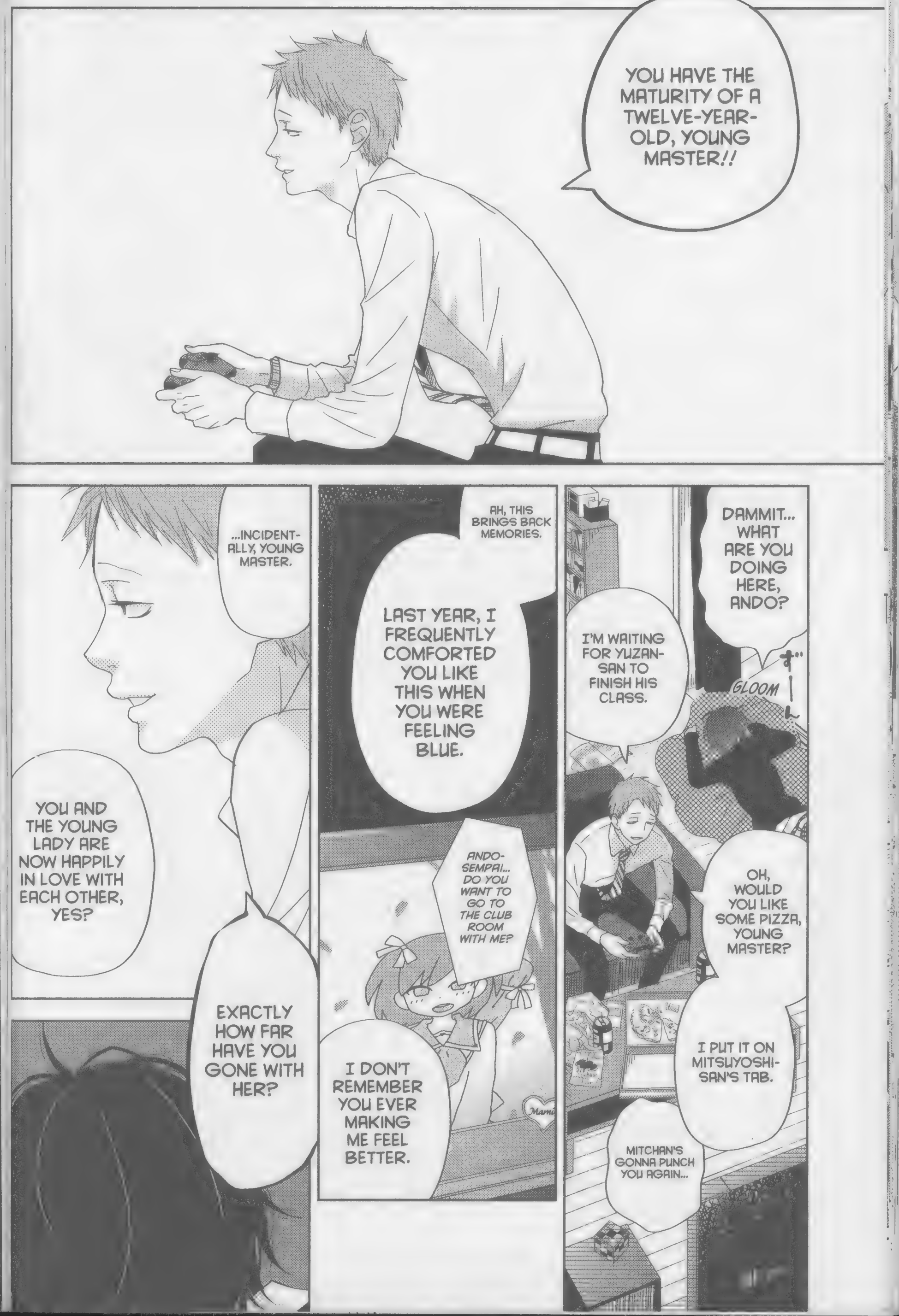

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS? WHAT'S THAT?
HUH? MY SLIPPERS ARE GONE.
I GUESS I'LL TAKE A FEW OF THESE.
"WHAT'S THAT"...? YOU KNOW.
CLASS ASSIGNMENTS.
National Trial Tests
SECOND-YEAR CLASS ASSIGNMENTS
WHAT...?
WHAAAAAAAT?

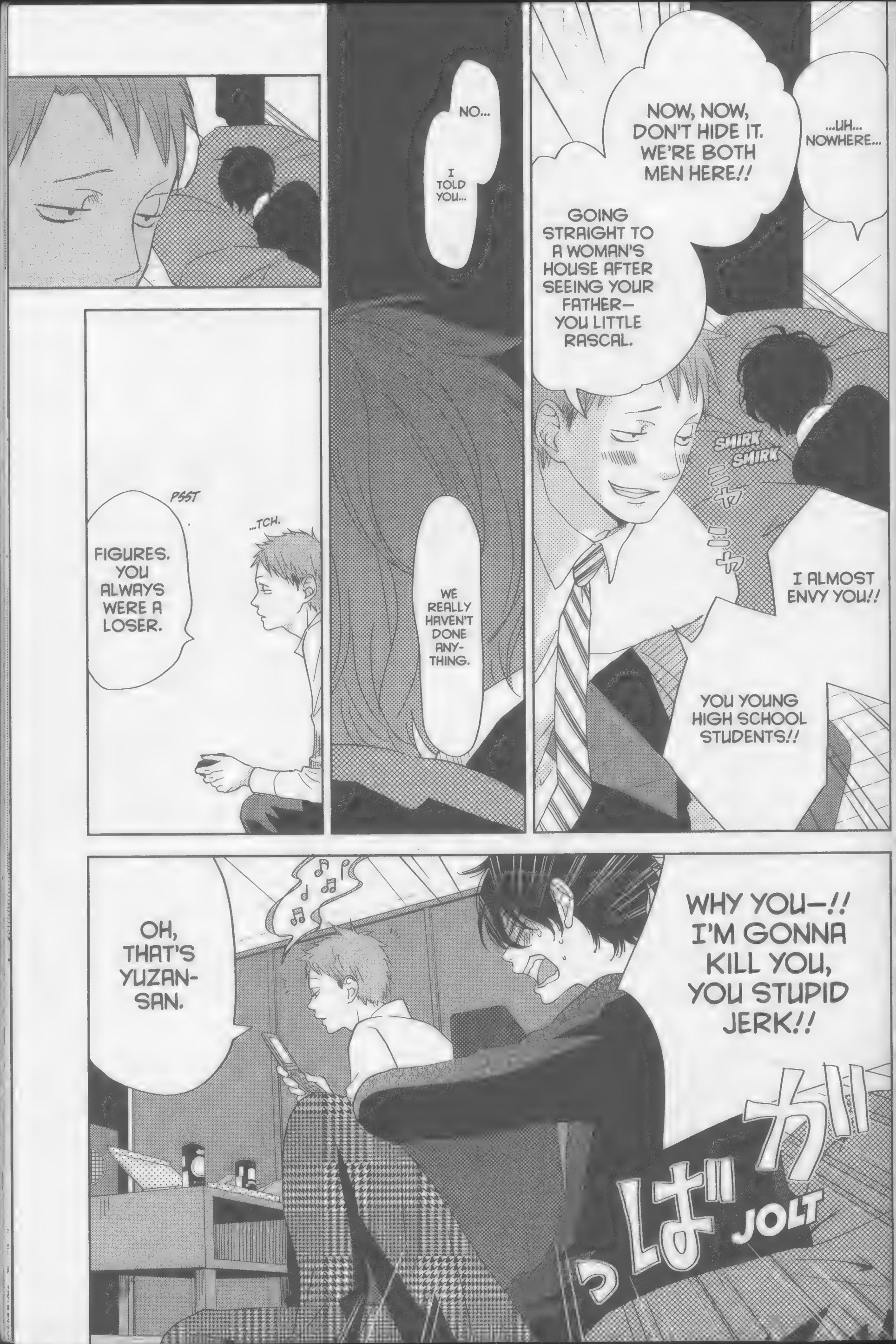

2-B
I'M SO GLAD... I'M SO, SO RELIEVED...
MY LIFE ISN'T OVER YET!!
HERE'S TO ANOTHER YEAR TOGETHER!!
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING NATSUME-SAN.
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE DIED IF YOU WERE PUT IN ANOTHER CLASS.
YOU COLD SLEEPER!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, NATSUME-SAN?!
RELIEF-INDUCED VIOLENCE
MURMUR
DON'T YOU GET IT YET, MITTY?!
'SUP, HASEGAWA!
MURMUR
HI.
GOOD TO SEE YOU.
THE FEAR OF BEING ALONE IN A CLASS-ROOM.
SURROUNDED BY UNFAMILIAR CLASS-MATES.
THE DEMONIC PRACTICE THAT REDUCES ALL TO NOTHINGNESS ONCE A YEAR,
THE DREADED RELATIONSHIP SHUFFLE!!

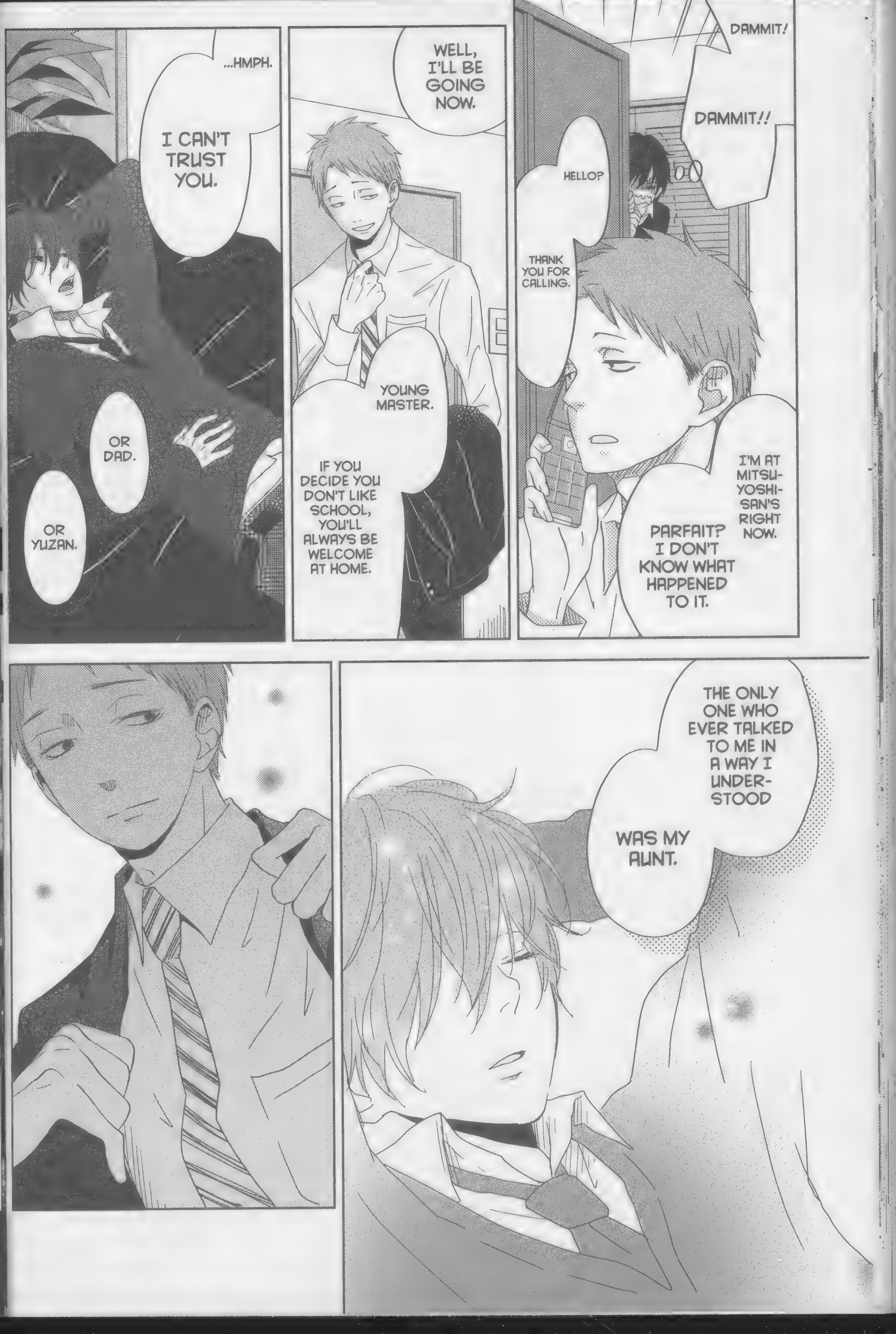

2-A
GSH
NO ONE CAN TAKE MY GOOD LUCK FROM ME!
I'LL NEVER LET IT GO! NEVER!
I'LL NEVER LET GO, EVEN IF MY BODY FREEZES SOLID!!
NATSUME-SAN, LET GO...
YOU'RE HEAVY!
...'SUP, YOSHIDA!
SO YOU'LL BE NEXT DOOR FROM NOW ON!
...GOOD LUCK!
GHI
SLAM!
JOLT!

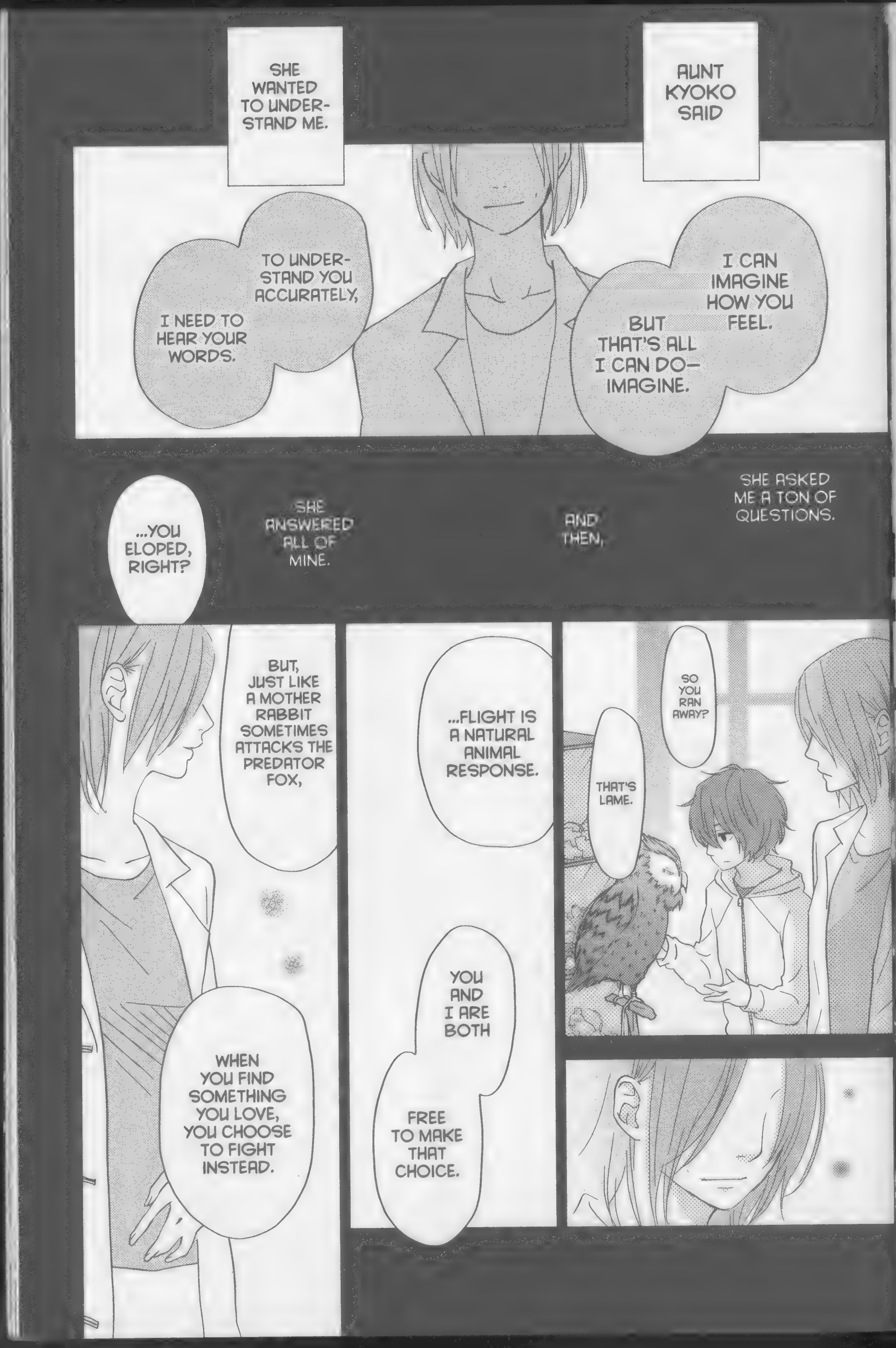

キ
HISS!!
...YOU GOT A PROBLEM?!!
G...GOOD MORNING, YOSHIDA-KUN...
SO WE'RE IN THE SAME CLASS NOW.
O-OSHIMA!
WHEW...
YOSHIDA.
IT'S YOSHIDA.
IT'S YOSHIDA-KUN!
...HUH?
...
...
REJECTER
...

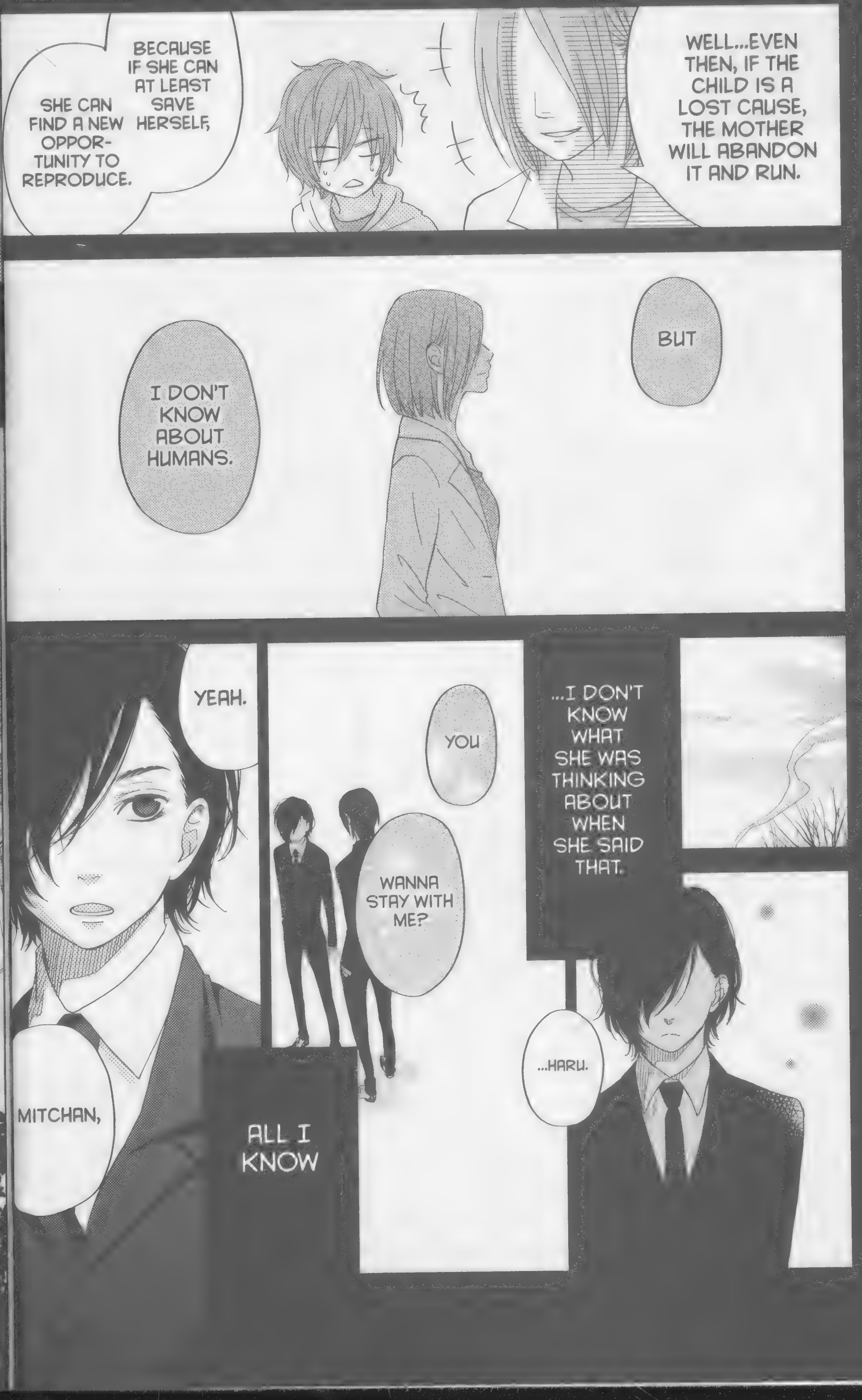

HERE...
SWAY
HERE'S TO A GOOD YEAR TOGETHER...
...
TMP...
TMP
TMP
TMP...
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP...
...SO YOU TURNED TAIL AND RAN WITHOUT EVEN SETTING FOOT INSIDE YOUR CLASSROOM.
MITSUYOSHI MISAWA

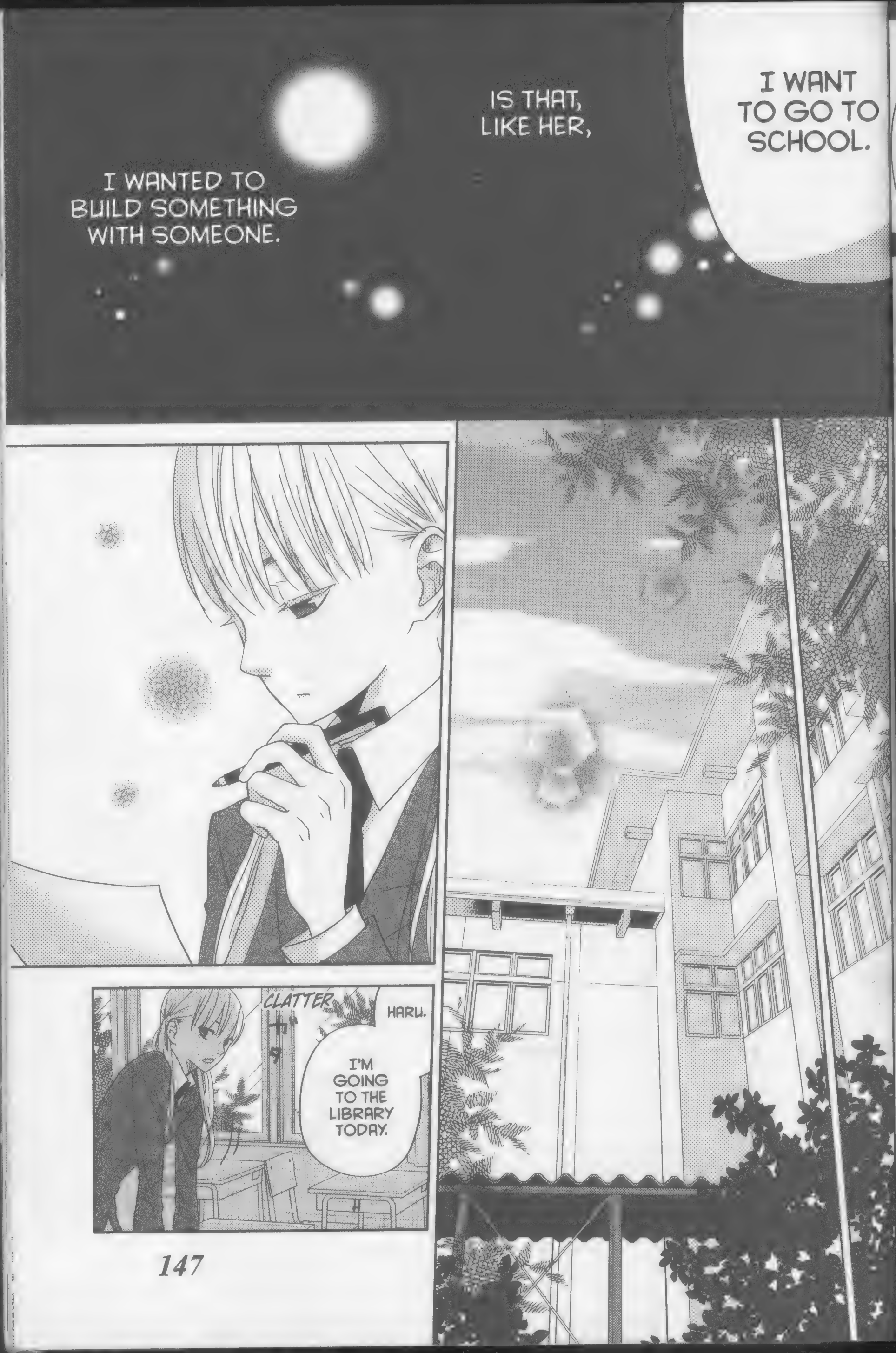

YOU HAVE THE MATURITY OF A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD, YOUNG MASTER!!
DAMMIT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ANDO?
I'M WAITING FOR YUZAN-SAN TO FINISH HIS CLASS.
ずーん
GLOOM
OH, WOULD YOU LIKE SOME PIZZA, YOUNG MASTER?
I PUT IT ON MITSUYOSHI-SAN'S TAB.
MITCHAN'S GONNA PUNCH YOU AGAIN...
AH, THIS BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
LAST YEAR, I FREQUENTLY COMFORTED YOU LIKE THIS WHEN YOU WERE FEELING BLUE.
ANDO-SEMPAI... DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THE CLUB ROOM WITH ME?
Mami
I DON'T REMEMBER YOU EVER MAKING ME FEEL BETTER.
...INCIDENTALLY, YOUNG MASTER.
YOU AND THE YOUNG LADY ARE NOW HAPPILY IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER, YES?
EXACTLY HOW FAR HAVE YOU GONE WITH HER?

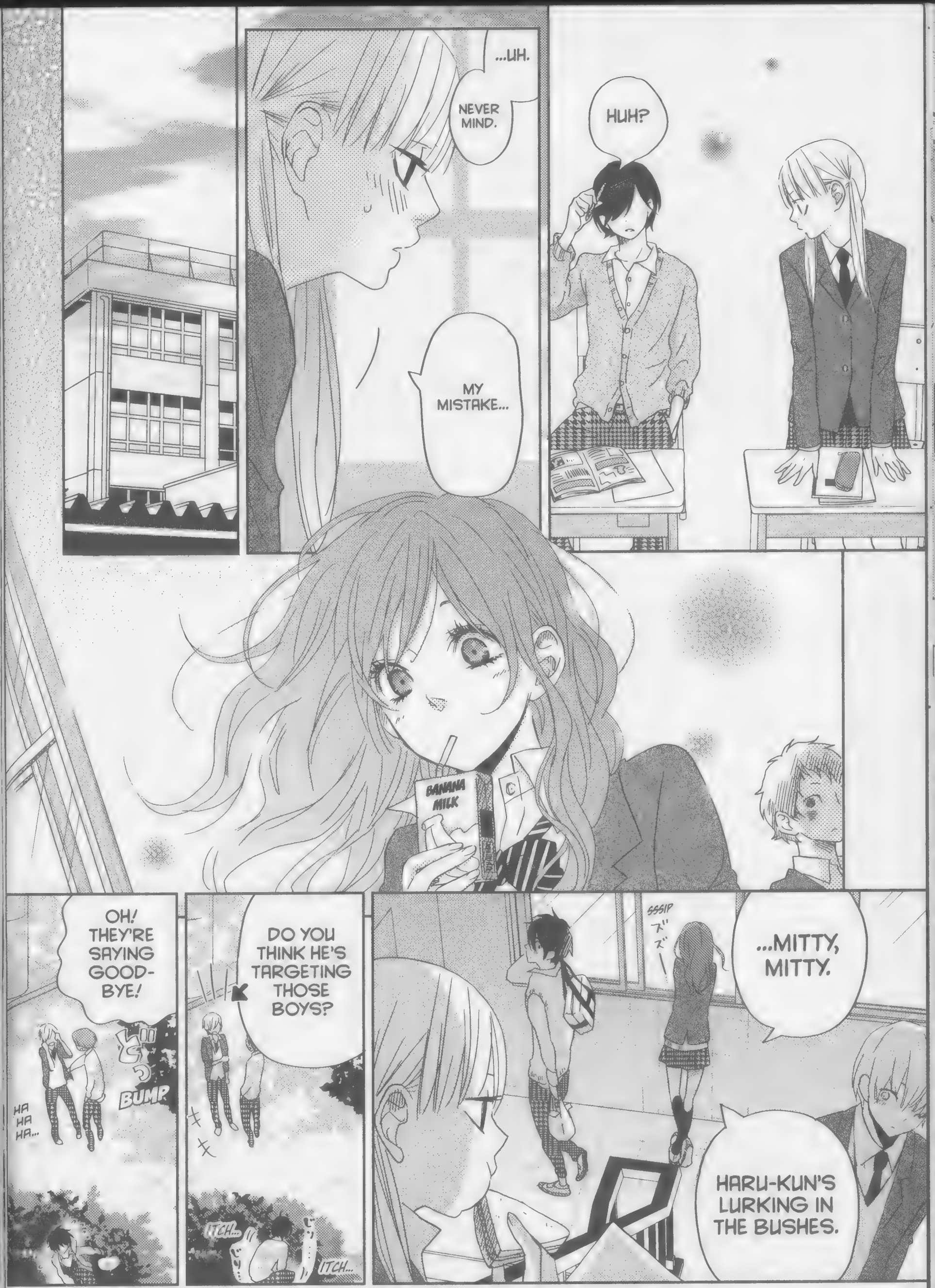

...UH... NOWHERE...
NOW, NOW, DON'T HIDE IT. WE'RE BOTH MEN HERE!!
GOING STRAIGHT TO A WOMAN'S HOUSE AFTER SEEING YOUR FATHER— YOU LITTLE RASCAL.
SMIRK SMIRK
ニヤ ニヤ
I ALMOST ENVY YOU!!
YOU YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!!
NO...
I TOLD YOU...
WE REALLY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING.
PSST
...TCH.
FIGURES. YOU ALWAYS WERE A LOSER.
WHY YOU—!! I'M GONNA KILL YOU, YOU STUPID JERK!!
JOLT
OH, THAT'S YUZAN-SAN.

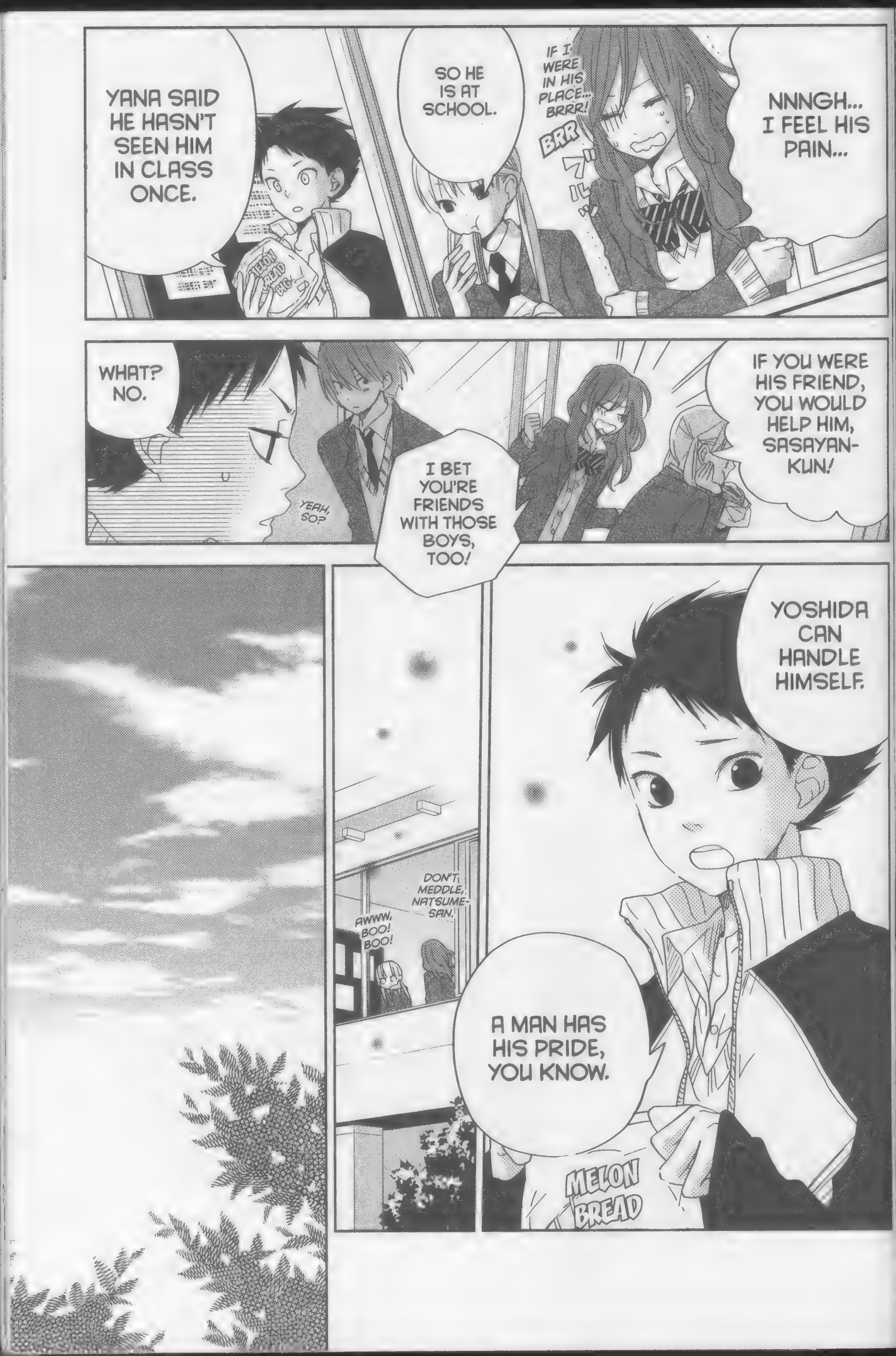

DAMMIT!
DAMMIT!!
HELLO?
THANK YOU FOR CALLING.
I'M AT MITSUYOSHI-SAN'S RIGHT NOW.
PARFAIT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO IT.
WELL, I'LL BE GOING NOW.
YOUNG MASTER.
IF YOU DECIDE YOU DON'T LIKE SCHOOL, YOU'LL ALWAYS BE WELCOME AT HOME.
...HMPH.
I CAN'T TRUST YOU.
OR DAD.
OR YUZAN.
THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER TALKED TO ME IN A WAY I UNDERSTOOD
WAS MY AUNT.

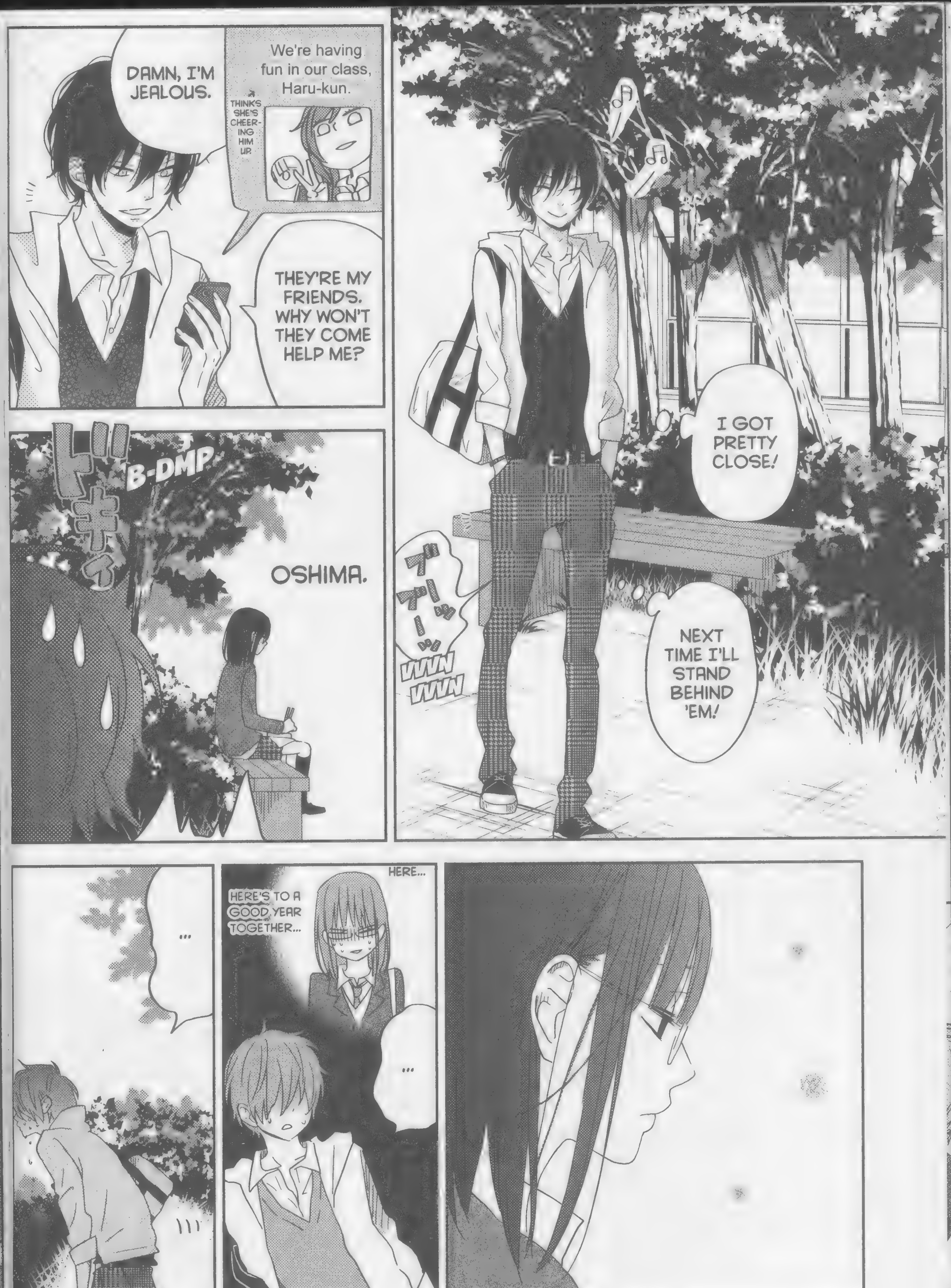

AUNT KYOKO SAID
I CAN IMAGINE HOW YOU FEEL.
BUT THAT'S ALL I CAN DO—IMAGINE.
SHE WANTED TO UNDERSTAND ME.
TO UNDERSTAND YOU ACCURATELY,
I NEED TO HEAR YOUR WORDS.
SHE ASKED ME A TON OF QUESTIONS.
AND THEN,
SHE ANSWERED ALL OF MINE.
...YOU ELOPED, RIGHT?
SO YOU RAN AWAY?
THAT'S LAME.
...FLIGHT IS A NATURAL ANIMAL RESPONSE.
BUT, JUST LIKE A MOTHER RABBIT SOMETIMES ATTACKS THE PREDATOR FOX,
WHEN YOU FIND SOMETHING YOU LOVE, YOU CHOOSE TO FIGHT INSTEAD.
YOU AND I ARE BOTH
FREE TO MAKE THAT CHOICE.

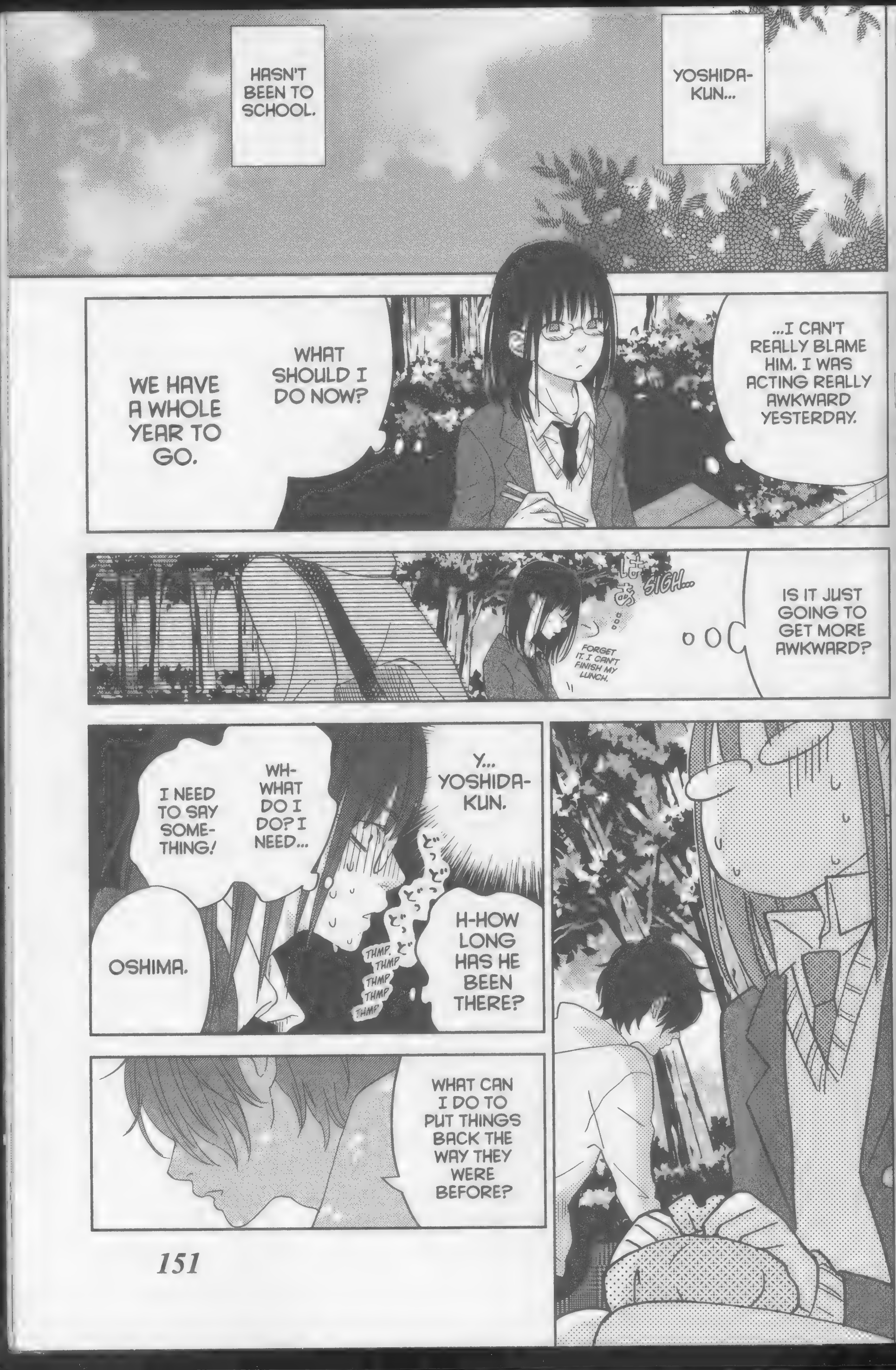

WELL...EVEN THEN, IF THE CHILD IS A LOST CAUSE, THE MOTHER WILL ABANDON IT AND RUN.
BECAUSE IF SHE CAN AT LEAST SAVE HERSELF, SHE CAN FIND A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO REPRODUCE.
BUT
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HUMANS.
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS THINKING ABOUT WHEN SHE SAID THAT.
...HARU.
YOU
WANNA STAY WITH ME?
YEAH.
MITCHAN,
ALL I KNOW

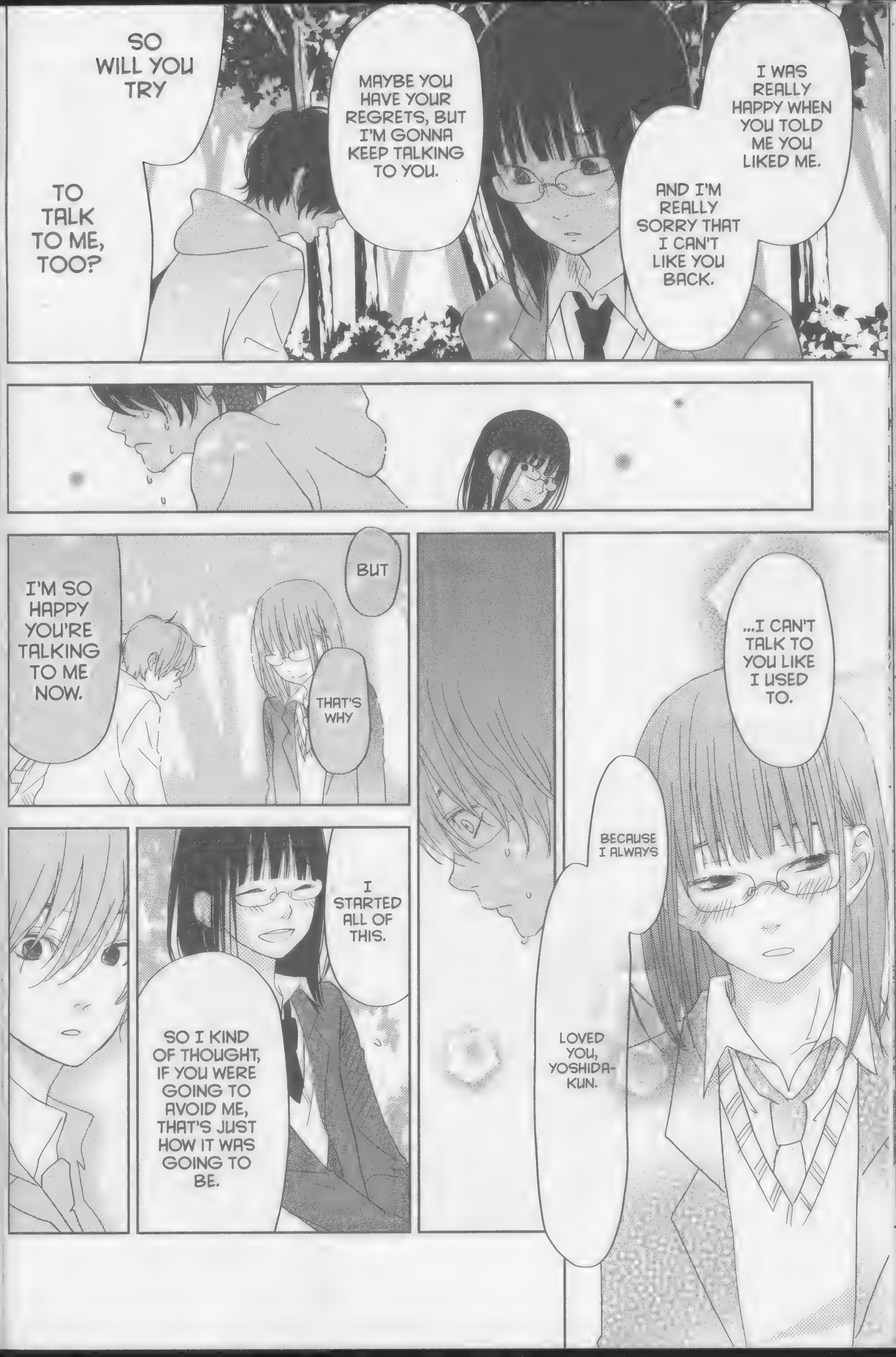

I WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL.
IS THAT, LIKE HER,
I WANTED TO BUILD SOMETHING WITH SOMEONE.
CLATTER
カタ
HARU.
I'M GOING TO THE LIBRARY TODAY.

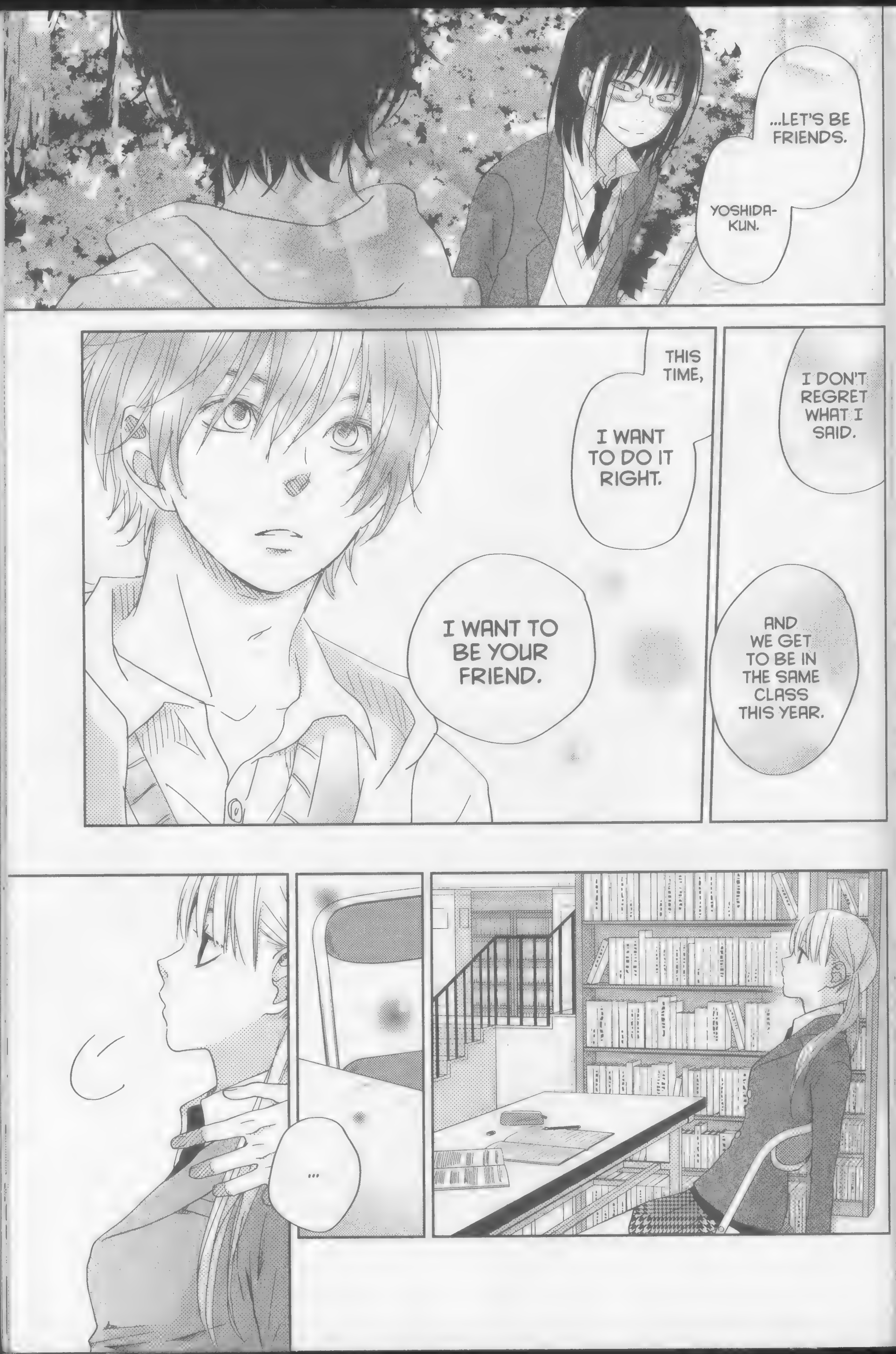

HUH?
...UH.
NEVER MIND.
MY MISTAKE...
BANANA MILK
...MITTY, MITTY.
SSSIP ズズー
HARU-KUN'S LURKING IN THE BUSHES.
DO YOU THINK HE'S TARGETING THOSE BOYS?
ITCH...
OH! THEY'RE SAYING GOOD-BYE!
BUMP
HA HA HA...
ITCH...

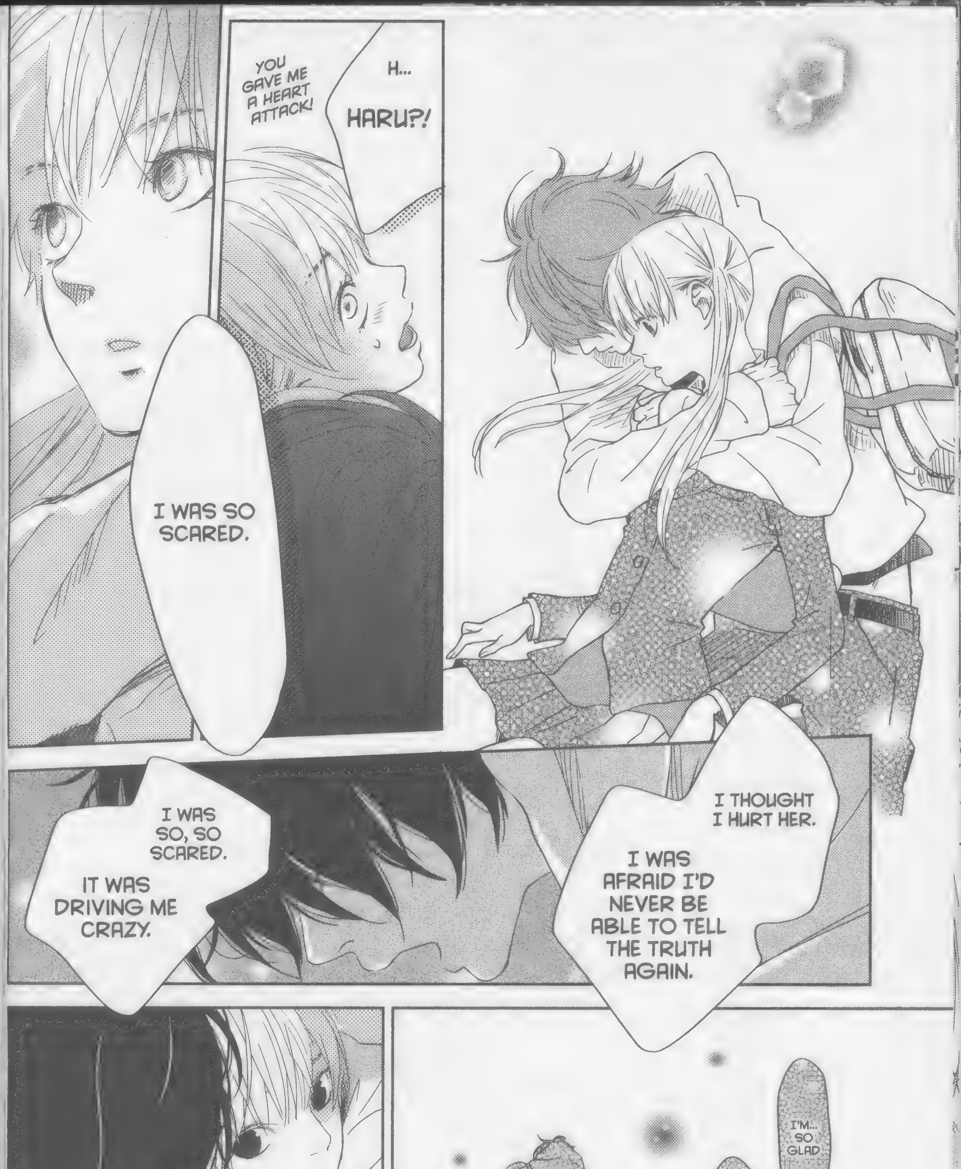

NNNGH... I FEEL HIS PAIN...
IF I WERE IN HIS PLACE... BRRR!
BRR
SO HE IS AT SCHOOL.
YANA SAID HE HASN'T SEEN HIM IN CLASS ONCE.
MELON BREAD BIG
IF YOU WERE HIS FRIEND, YOU WOULD HELP HIM, SASAYAN-KUN!
I BET YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH THOSE BOYS, TOO!
WHAT? NO.
YEAH, SO?
YOSHIDA CAN HANDLE HIMSELF.
DON'T MEDDLE, NATSUME-SAN.
AWWW, BOO! BOO!
A MAN HAS HIS PRIDE, YOU KNOW.
MELON BREAD

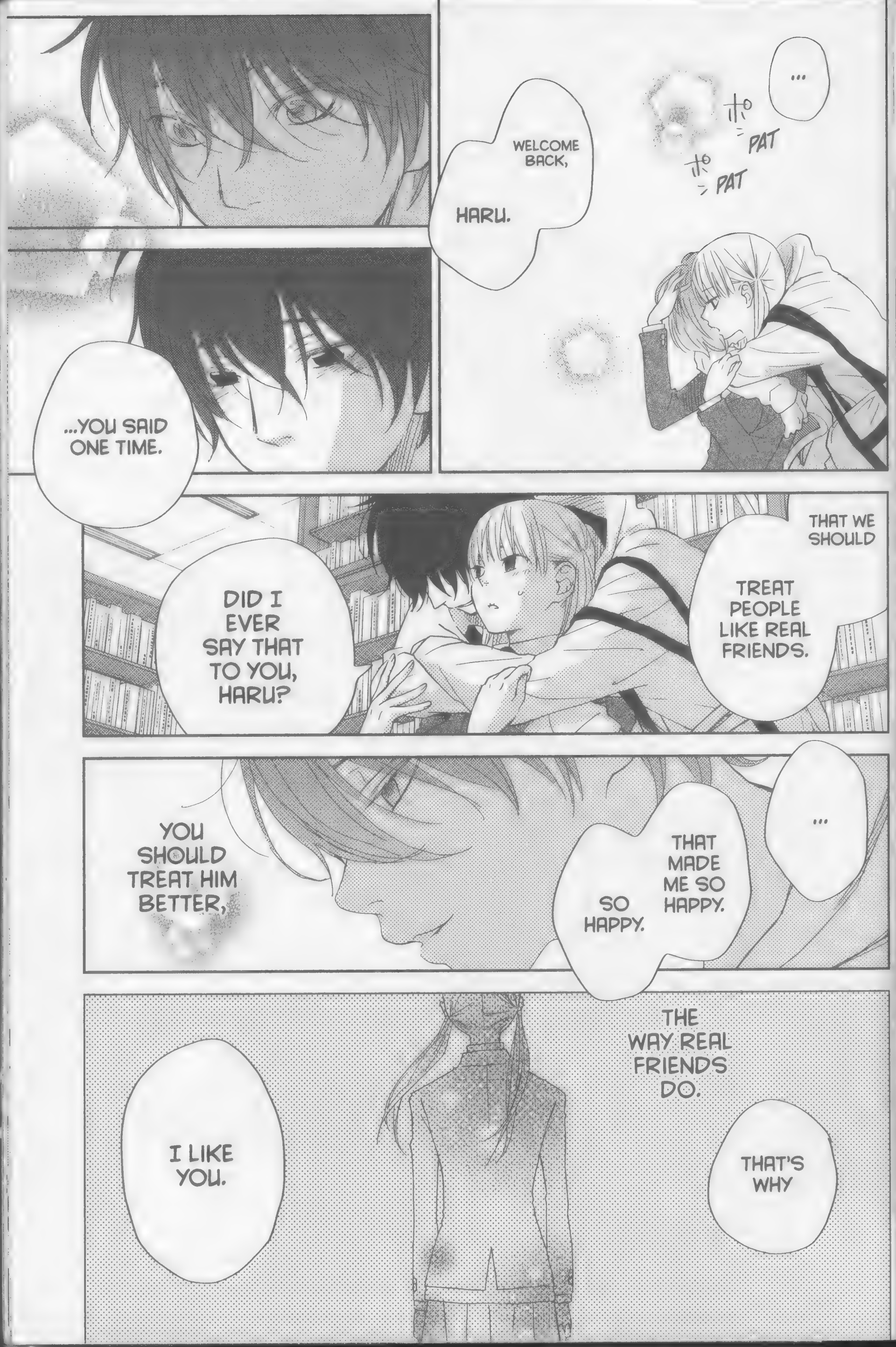

I GOT PRETTY CLOSE!
NEXT TIME I'LL STAND BEHIND 'EM!
ブーッ ブーッ
VVVN VVVN
We're having fun in our class, Haru-kun.
THINKS SHE'S CHEERING HIM UP
DAMN, I'M JEALOUS.
THEY'RE MY FRIENDS. WHY WON'T THEY COME HELP ME?
ドキィ
B-DMP
OSHIMA.
HERE...
HERE'S TO A GOOD YEAR TOGETHER...
...
...

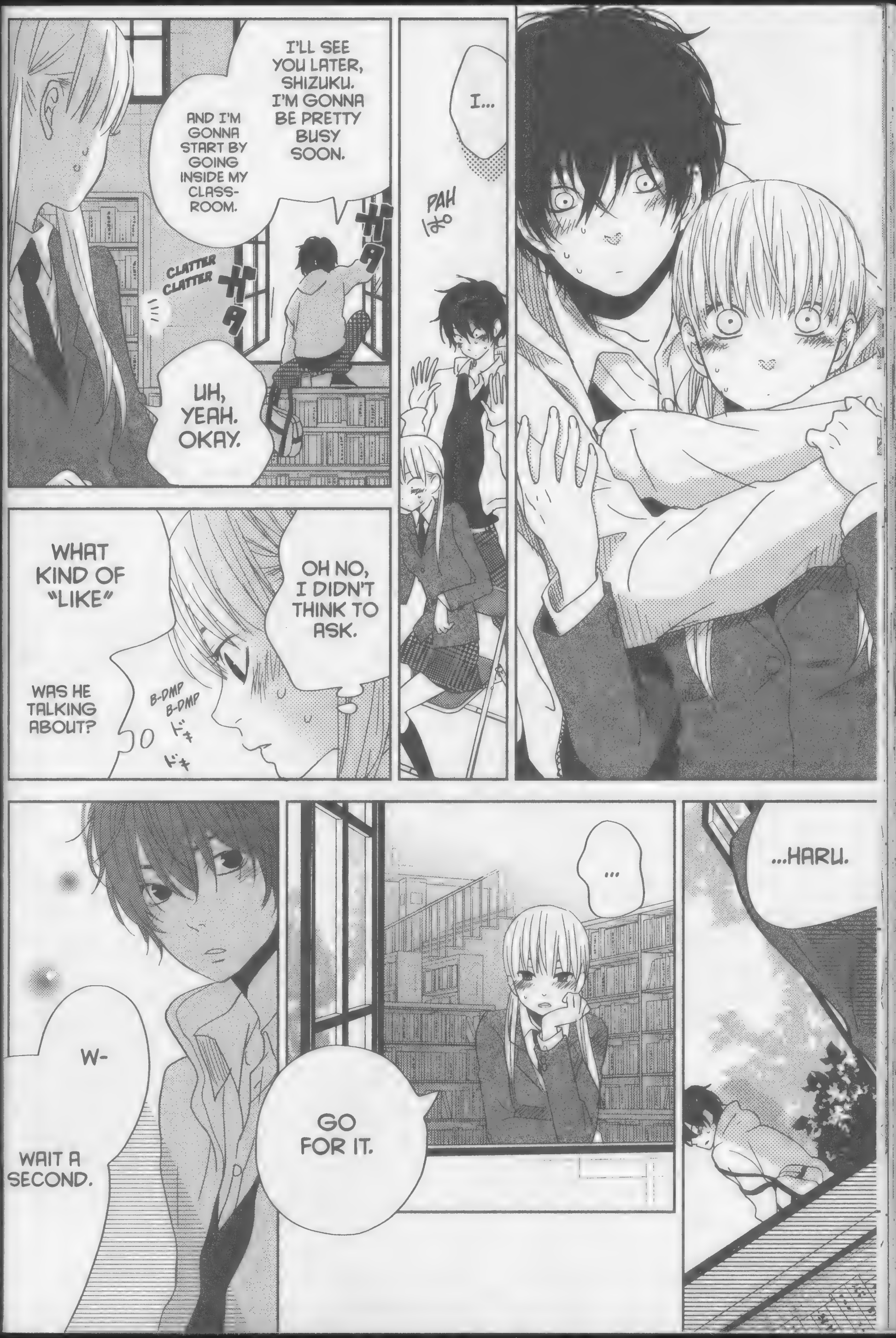

YOSHIDA-KUN...
HASN'T BEEN TO SCHOOL.
...I CAN'T REALLY BLAME HIM. I WAS ACTING REALLY AWKWARD YESTERDAY.
WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?
WE HAVE A WHOLE YEAR TO GO.
IS IT JUST GOING TO GET MORE AWKWARD?
はあ
SIGH...
FORGET IT, I CAN'T FINISH MY LUNCH.
Y... YOSHIDA-KUN.
WH-WHAT DO I DO? I NEED...
I NEED TO SAY SOME-THING!
H-HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN THERE?
どっどっどっど
THMP, THMP, THMP, THMP, THMP
OSHIMA.
WHAT CAN I DO TO PUT THINGS BACK THE WAY THEY WERE BEFORE?

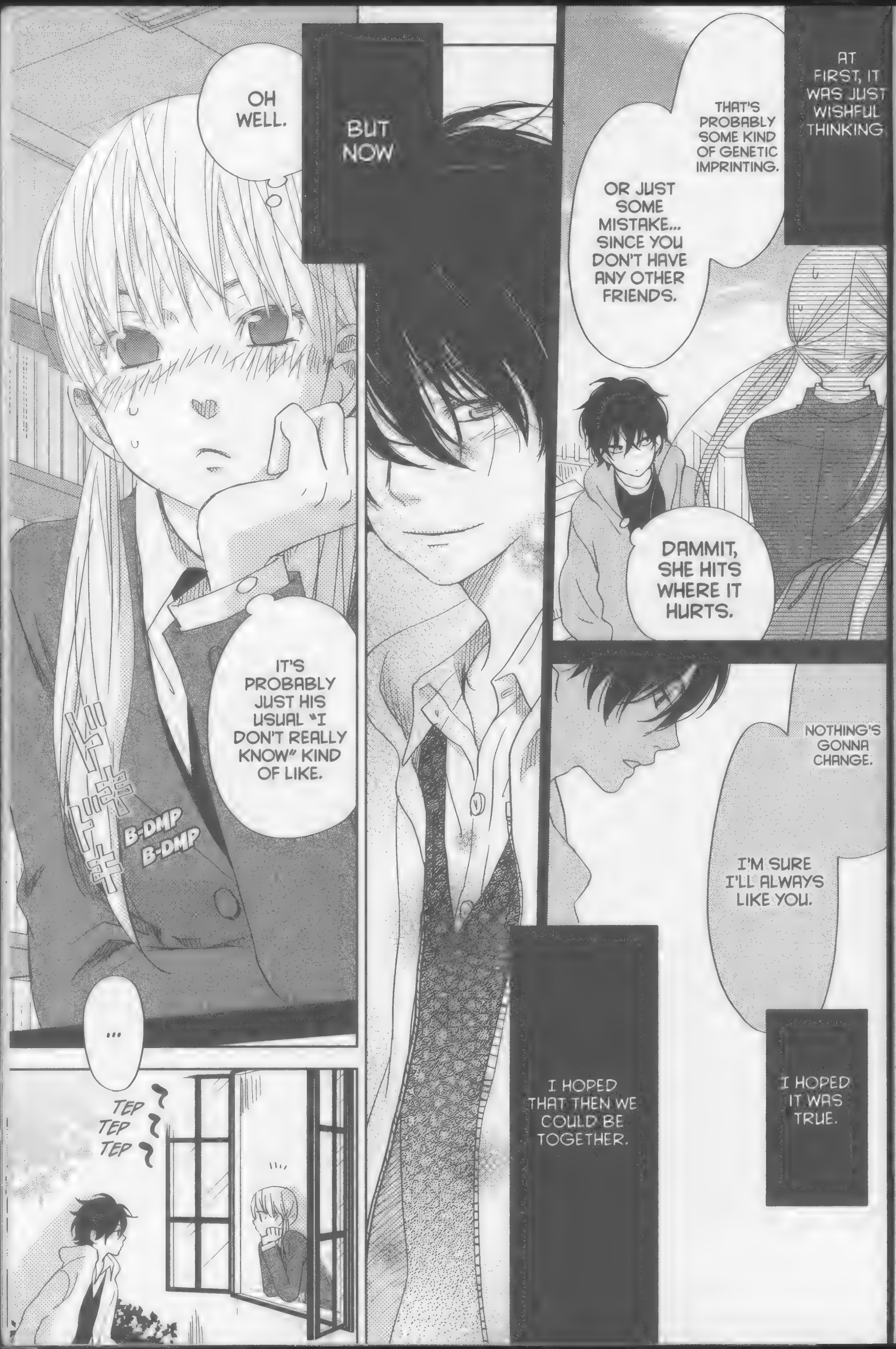

I WAS REALLY HAPPY WHEN YOU TOLD ME YOU LIKED ME.
AND I'M REALLY SORRY THAT I CAN'T LIKE YOU BACK.
MAYBE YOU HAVE YOUR REGRETS, BUT I'M GONNA KEEP TALKING TO YOU.
SO WILL YOU TRY
TO TALK TO ME, TOO?
...I CAN'T TALK TO YOU LIKE I USED TO.
BECAUSE I ALWAYS
LOVED YOU, YOSHIDA-KUN.
BUT
THAT'S WHY
I'M SO HAPPY YOU'RE TALKING TO ME NOW.
I STARTED ALL OF THIS.
SO I KIND OF THOUGHT, IF YOU WERE GOING TO AVOID ME, THAT'S JUST HOW IT WAS GOING TO BE.

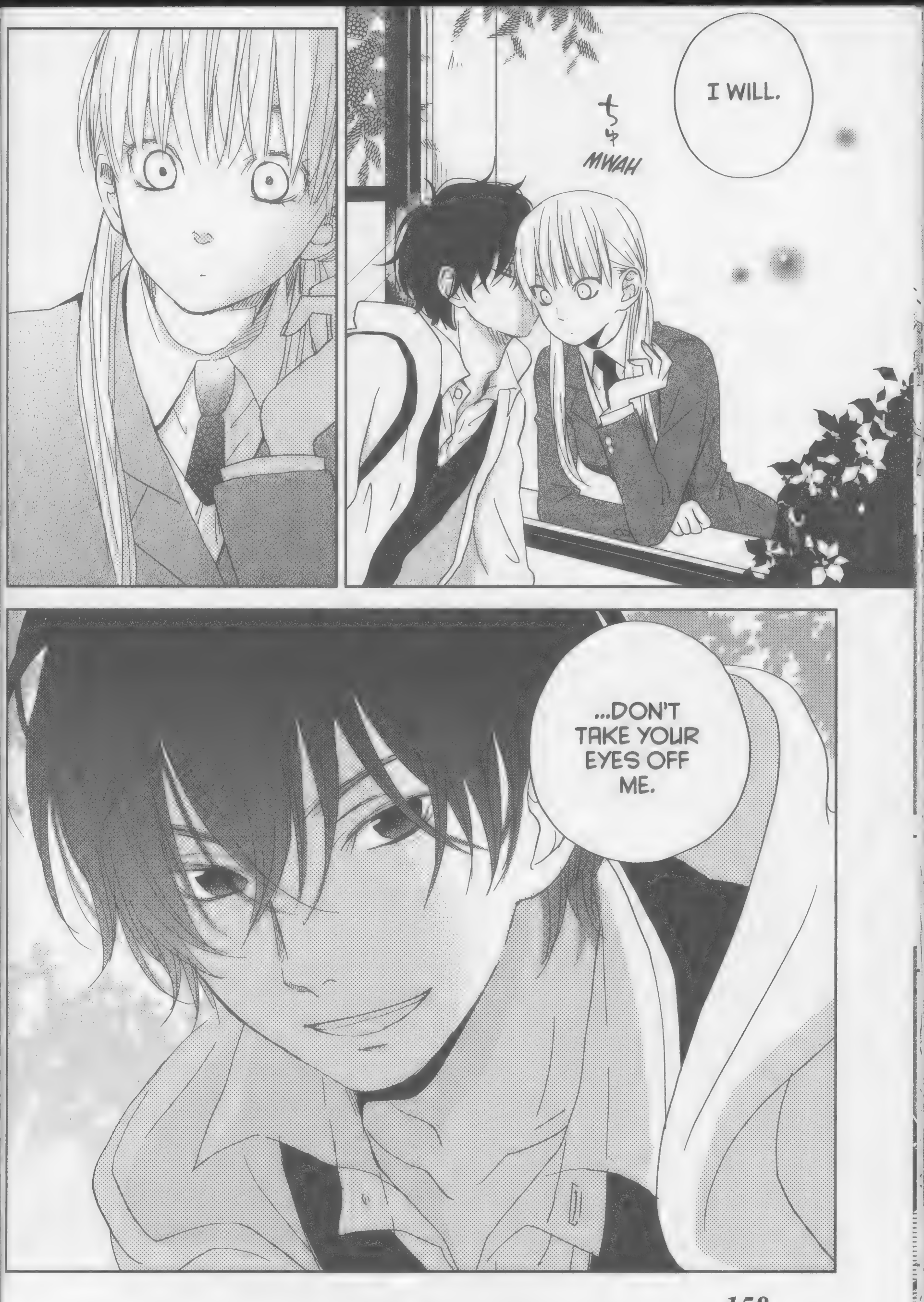

...LET'S BE FRIENDS.
YOSHIDA-KUN.
I DON'T REGRET WHAT I SAID.
AND WE GET TO BE IN THE SAME CLASS THIS YEAR.
THIS TIME,
I WANT TO DO IT RIGHT.
I WANT TO BE YOUR FRIEND.
...

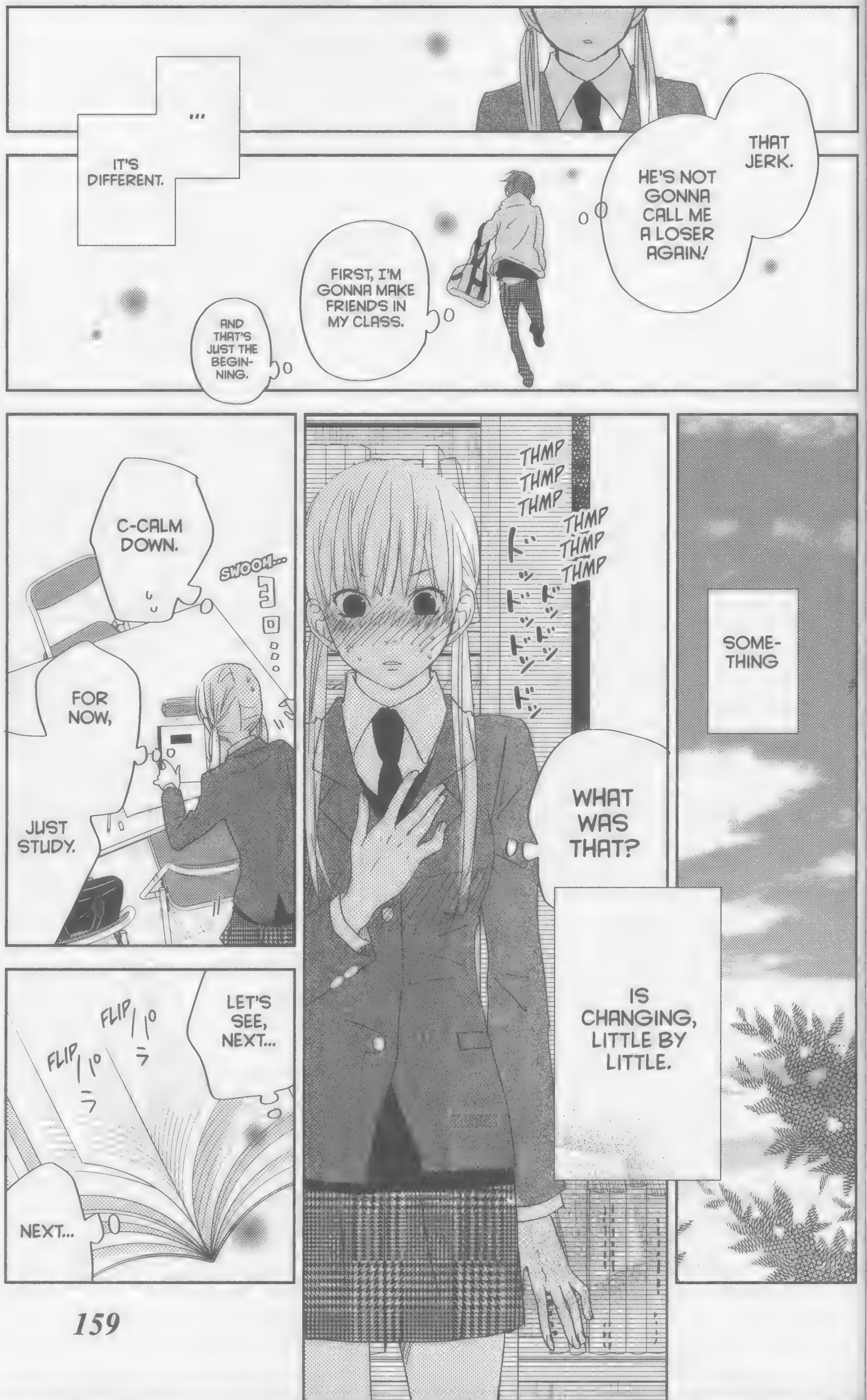

H...
HARU?!
YOU GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK!
I WAS SO SCARED.
I THOUGHT I HURT HER.
I WAS AFRAID I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO TELL THE TRUTH AGAIN.
I WAS SO, SO SCARED.
IT WAS DRIVING ME CRAZY.
I'M... SO GLAD
I DIDN'T RUN.

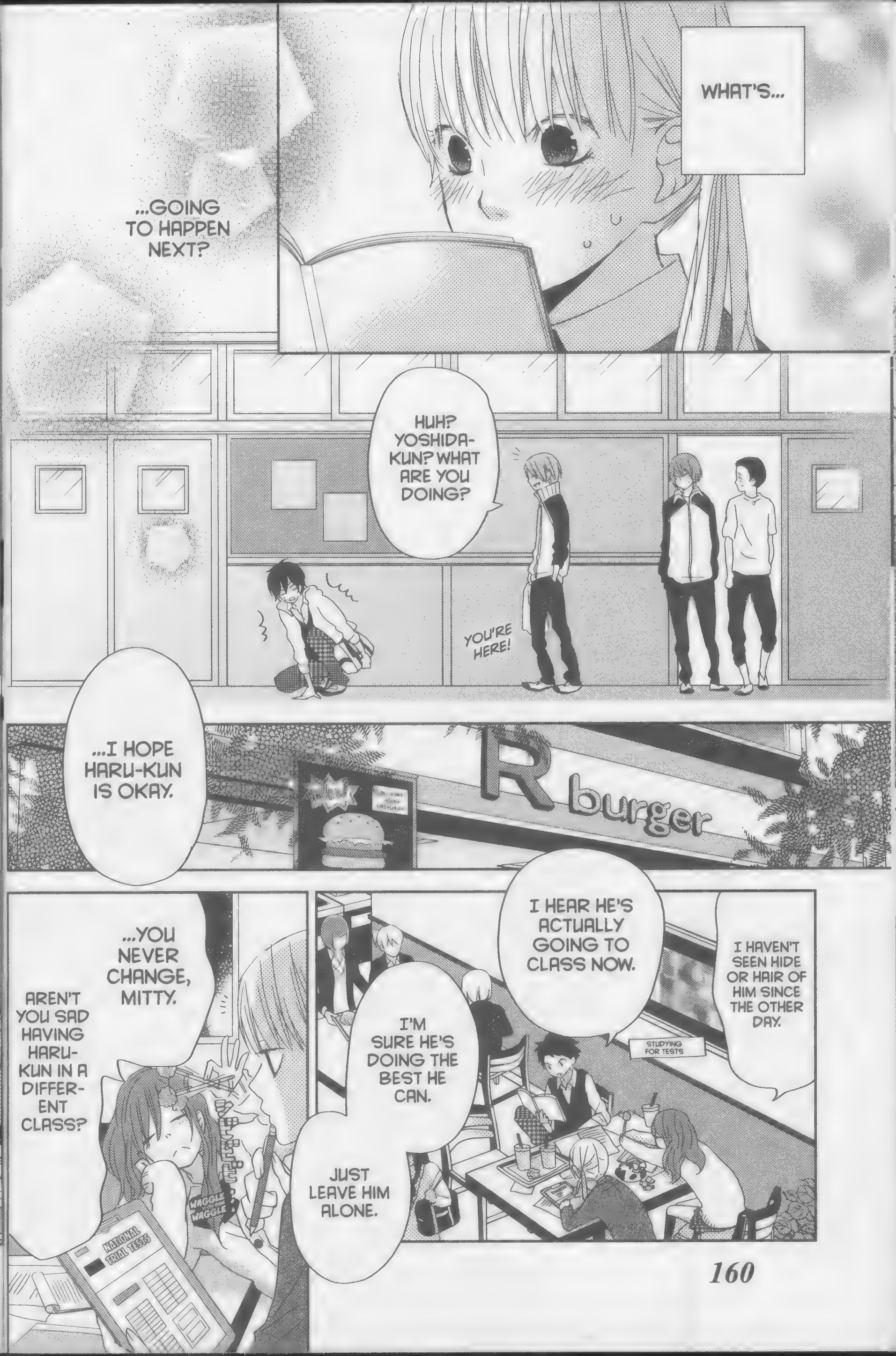

...
WELCOME BACK,
HARU.
ポ PAT
ポ PAT
...YOU SAID ONE TIME.
THAT WE SHOULD
TREAT PEOPLE LIKE REAL FRIENDS.
DID I EVER SAY THAT TO YOU, HARU?
...
THAT MADE ME SO HAPPY.
SO HAPPY.
YOU SHOULD TREAT HIM BETTER,
THE WAY REAL FRIENDS DO.
THAT'S WHY
I LIKE YOU.

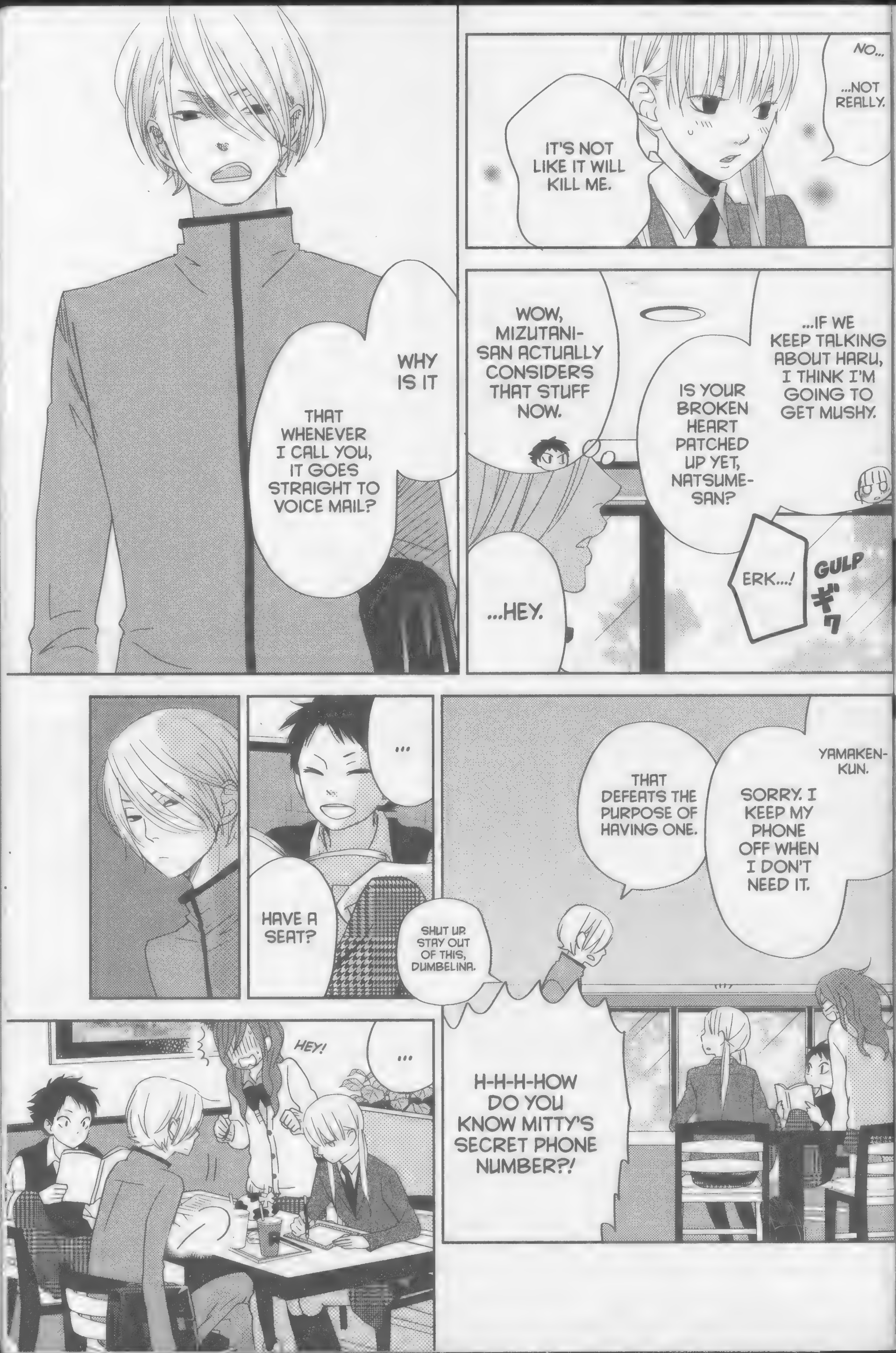

I...
PAH ぱっ
I'LL SEE YOU LATER, SHIZUKU. I'M GONNA BE PRETTY BUSY SOON.
AND I'M GONNA START BY GOING INSIDE MY CLASSROOM.
CLATTER CLATTER ガタ ガタ
UH, YEAH. OKAY.
OH NO, I DIDN'T THINK TO ASK.
WHAT KIND OF "LIKE"
WAS HE TALKING ABOUT?
B-DMP B-DMP ドキ ドキ
...HARU.
...
GO FOR IT.
W-
WAIT A SECOND.

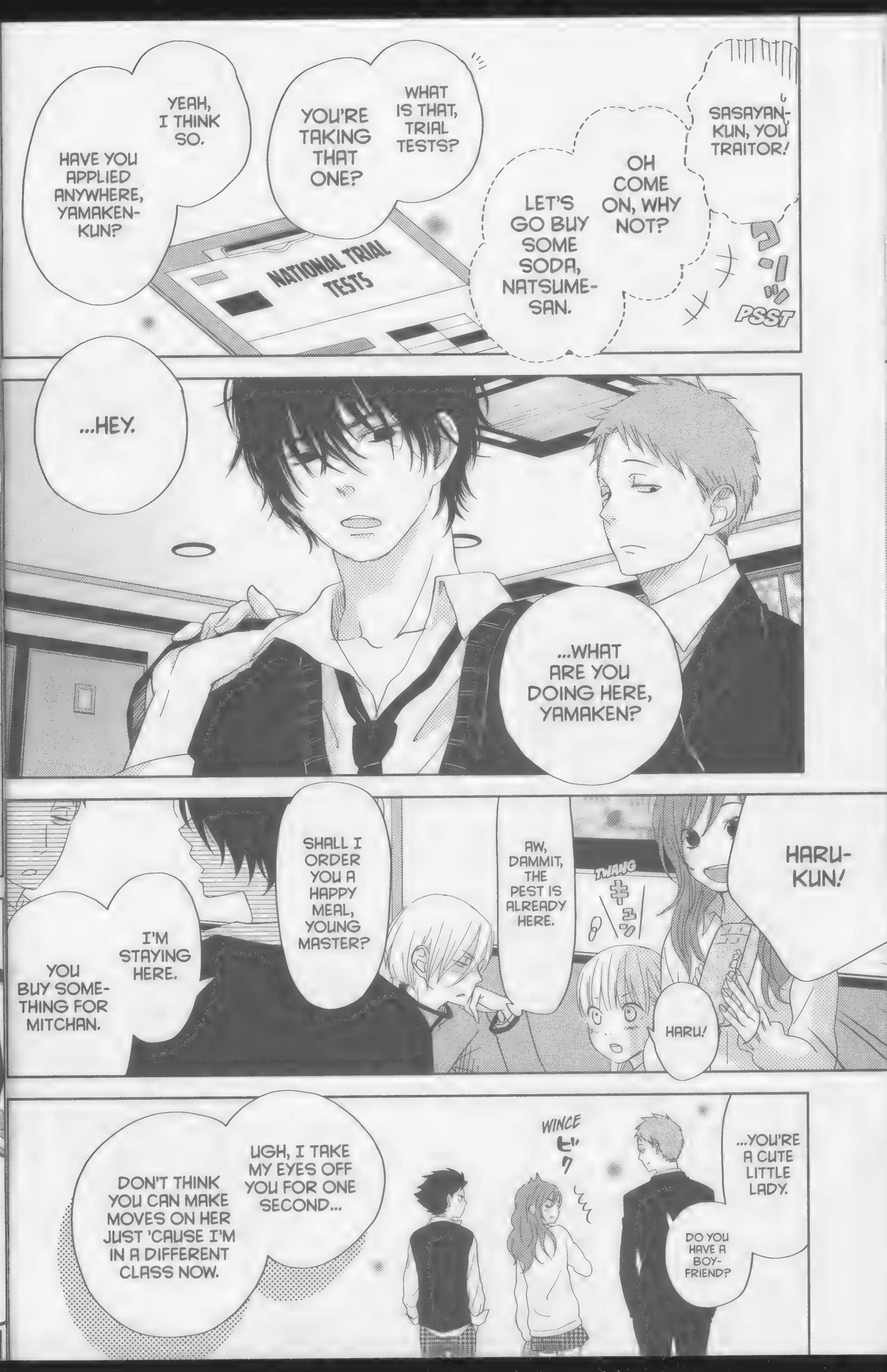

AT FIRST, IT WAS JUST WISHFUL THINKING.
THAT'S PROBABLY SOME KIND OF GENETIC IMPRINTING.
OR JUST SOME MISTAKE... SINCE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER FRIENDS.
DAMMIT, SHE HITS WHERE IT HURTS.
NOTHING'S GONNA CHANGE.
I'M SURE I'LL ALWAYS LIKE YOU.
I HOPED IT WAS TRUE.
I HOPED THAT THEN WE COULD BE TOGETHER.
BUT NOW
OH WELL.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST HIS USUAL "I DON'T REALLY KNOW" KIND OF LIKE.
B-DMP B-DMP ドキ ドキ
...
TEP TEP TEP

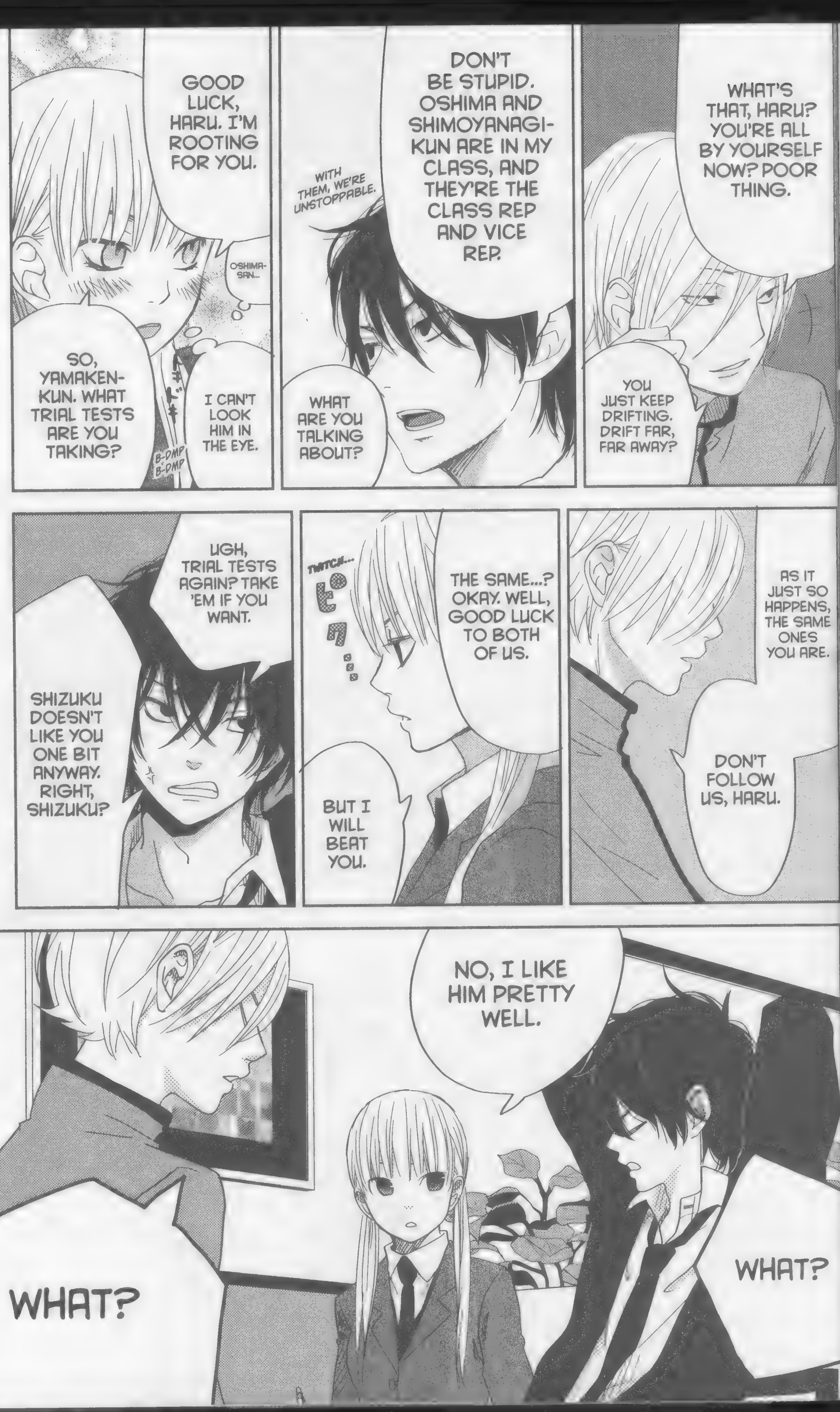

I WILL.
ちゅ
MWAH
...DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF ME.

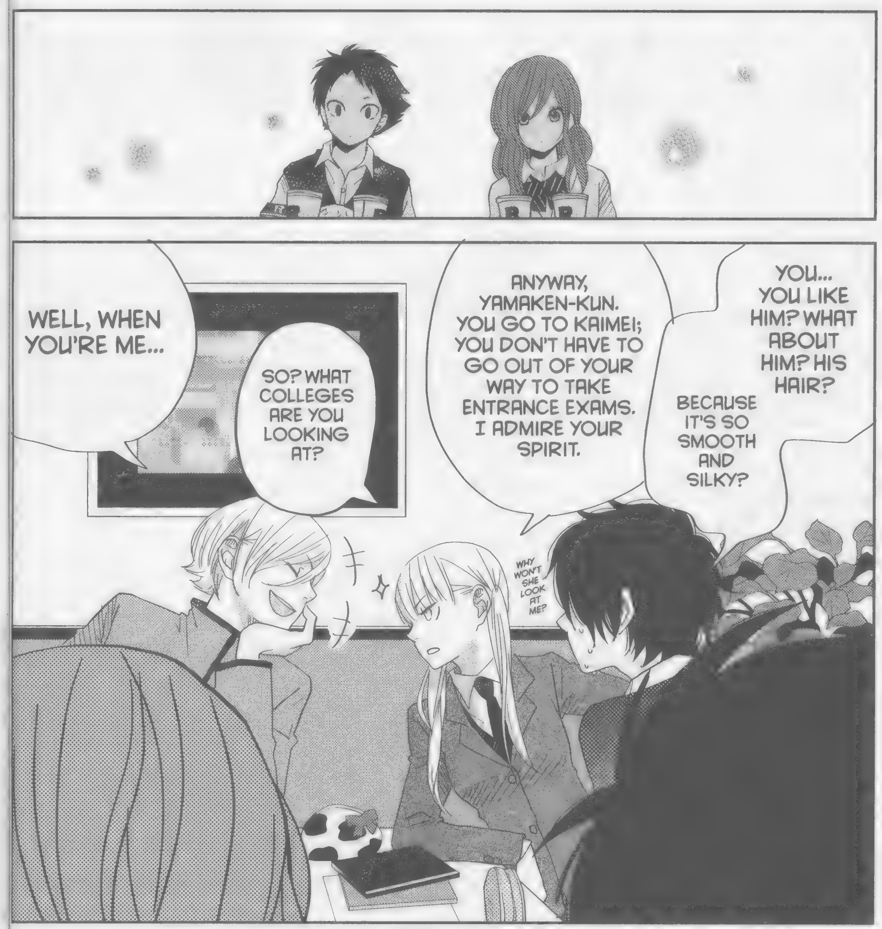

...
THAT JERK.
HE'S NOT GONNA CALL ME A LOSER AGAIN!
FIRST, I'M GONNA MAKE FRIENDS IN MY CLASS.
AND THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING.
IT'S DIFFERENT.
SOMETHING
IS CHANGING, LITTLE BY LITTLE.
THMP THMP THMP
ドッドッドッドッ
THMP THMP THMP
ドッドッドッ
WHAT WAS THAT?
C-CALM DOWN.
SWOOM...
ヨロ
FOR NOW,
JUST STUDY.
LET'S SEE, NEXT...
FLIP パラ
FLIP パラ
NEXT...


WHAT'S...
...GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT?
HUH? YOSHIDA-KUN? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'RE HERE!
R burger
...I HOPE HARU-KUN IS OKAY.
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIDE OR HAIR OF HIM SINCE THE OTHER DAY.
I HEAR HE'S ACTUALLY GOING TO CLASS NOW.
STUDYING FOR TESTS
I'M SURE HE'S DOING THE BEST HE CAN.
JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE.
...YOU NEVER CHANGE, MITTY.
AREN'T YOU SAD HAVING HARU-KUN IN A DIFFERENT CLASS?
WAGGLE WAGGLE
NATIONAL TRIAL TESTS


NO...
...NOT REALLY.
IT'S NOT LIKE IT WILL KILL ME.
...IF WE KEEP TALKING ABOUT HARU, I THINK I'M GOING TO GET MUSHY.
IS YOUR BROKEN HEART PATCHED UP YET, NATSUME-SAN?
WOW, MIZUTANI-SAN ACTUALLY CONSIDERS THAT STUFF NOW.
GULP
ERK...!
...HEY.
WHY IS IT
THAT WHENEVER I CALL YOU, IT GOES STRAIGHT TO VOICE MAIL?
YAMAKEN-KUN.
SORRY. I KEEP MY PHONE OFF WHEN I DON'T NEED IT.
THAT DEFEATS THE PURPOSE OF HAVING ONE.
SHUT UP. STAY OUT OF THIS, DUMBELINA.
H-H-H-HOW DO YOU KNOW MITTY'S SECRET PHONE NUMBER?!
...
HAVE A SEAT?
HEY!
...

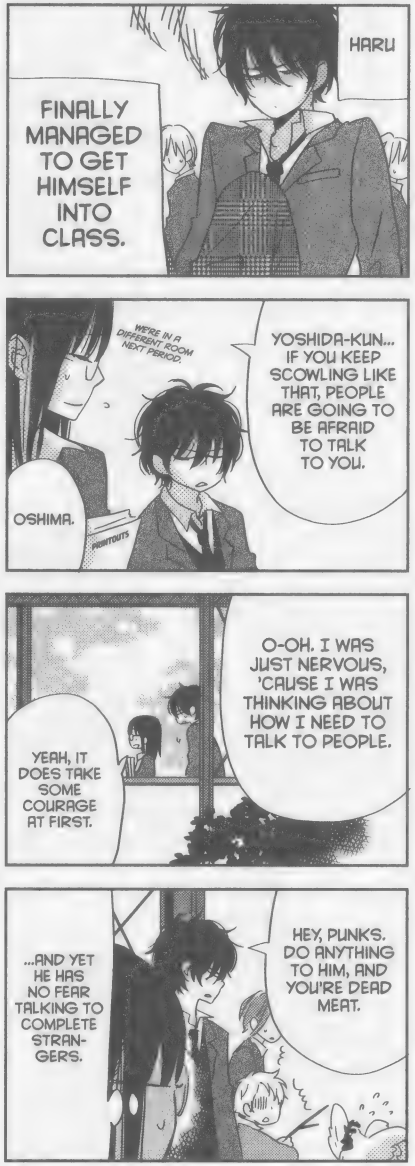

SASAYAN-KUN, YOU TRAITOR!
PSST
OH COME ON, WHY NOT?
LET'S GO BUY SOME SODA, NATSUME-SAN.
WHAT IS THAT, TRIAL TESTS?
YOU'RE TAKING THAT ONE?
YEAH, I THINK SO.
HAVE YOU APPLIED ANYWHERE, YAMAKEN-KUN?
NATIONAL TRIAL TESTS
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, YAMAKEN?
...HEY.
HARU-KUN!
HARU!
TWANG
AW, DAMMIT, THE PEST IS ALREADY HERE.
SHALL I ORDER YOU A HAPPY MEAL, YOUNG MASTER?
I'M STAYING HERE.
YOU BUY SOMETHING FOR MITCHAN.
...YOU'RE A CUTE LITTLE LADY.
DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND?
WINCE
UGH, I TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU FOR ONE SECOND...
DON'T THINK YOU CAN MAKE MOVES ON HER JUST 'CAUSE I'M IN A DIFFERENT CLASS NOW.


WHAT'S THAT, HARU? YOU'RE ALL BY YOURSELF NOW? POOR THING.
YOU JUST KEEP DRIFTING. DRIFT FAR, FAR AWAY?
DON'T BE STUPID. OSHIMA AND SHIMOYANAGI-KUN ARE IN MY CLASS, AND THEY'RE THE CLASS REP AND VICE REP.
WITH THEM, WE'RE UNSTOPPABLE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
GOOD LUCK, HARU. I'M ROOTING FOR YOU.
OSHIMA-SAN...
I CAN'T LOOK HIM IN THE EYE.
B-DMP B-DMP
SO, YAMAKEN-KUN. WHAT TRIAL TESTS ARE YOU TAKING?
AS IT JUST SO HAPPENS, THE SAME ONES YOU ARE.
DON'T FOLLOW US, HARU.
THE SAME...? OKAY. WELL, GOOD LUCK TO BOTH OF US.
TWITCH...
BUT I WILL BEAT YOU.
UGH, TRIAL TESTS AGAIN? TAKE 'EM IF YOU WANT.
SHIZUKU DOESN'T LIKE YOU ONE BIT ANYWAY. RIGHT, SHIZUKU?
WHAT?
NO, I LIKE HIM PRETTY WELL.
WHAT?

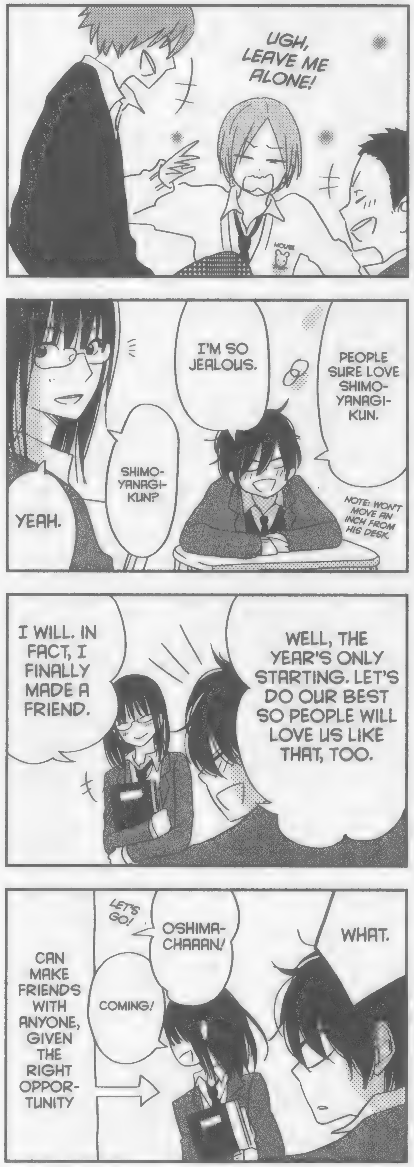

YOU... YOU LIKE HIM? WHAT ABOUT HIM? HIS HAIR?
BECAUSE IT'S SO SMOOTH AND SILKY?
ANYWAY, YAMAKEN-KUN. YOU GO TO KAIMEI; YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO TAKE ENTRANCE EXAMS. I ADMIRE YOUR SPIRIT.
WHY WON'T SHE LOOK AT ME?
SO? WHAT COLLEGES ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
WELL, WHEN YOU'RE ME...
WHA... WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
I DON'T THINK THEY'RE ON THE SAME PAGE.
AH, HA, HA.
NO IDEA!
INCIDENTALLY, COULD YOU POSSIBLY DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT ARROGANCE OF YOURS?
LOOK WHO'S TALKING.
SHIZUKU! WHY WON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?

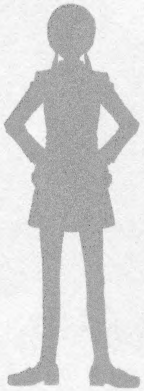
CONTINUES IN VOLUME 8

2-A


HARU
FINALLY MANAGED TO GET HIMSELF INTO CLASS.
YOSHIDA-KUN... IF YOU KEEP SCOWLING LIKE THAT, PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE AFRAID TO TALK TO YOU.
WE'RE IN A DIFFERENT ROOM NEXT PERIOD.
OSHIMA.
PRINTOUTS
O-OH. I WAS JUST NERVOUS, 'CAUSE I WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW I NEED TO TALK TO PEOPLE.
YEAH, IT DOES TAKE SOME COURAGE AT FIRST.
HEY, PUNKS. DO ANYTHING TO HIM, AND YOU'RE DEAD MEAT.
...AND YET HE HAS NO FEAR TALKING TO COMPLETE STRANGERS.

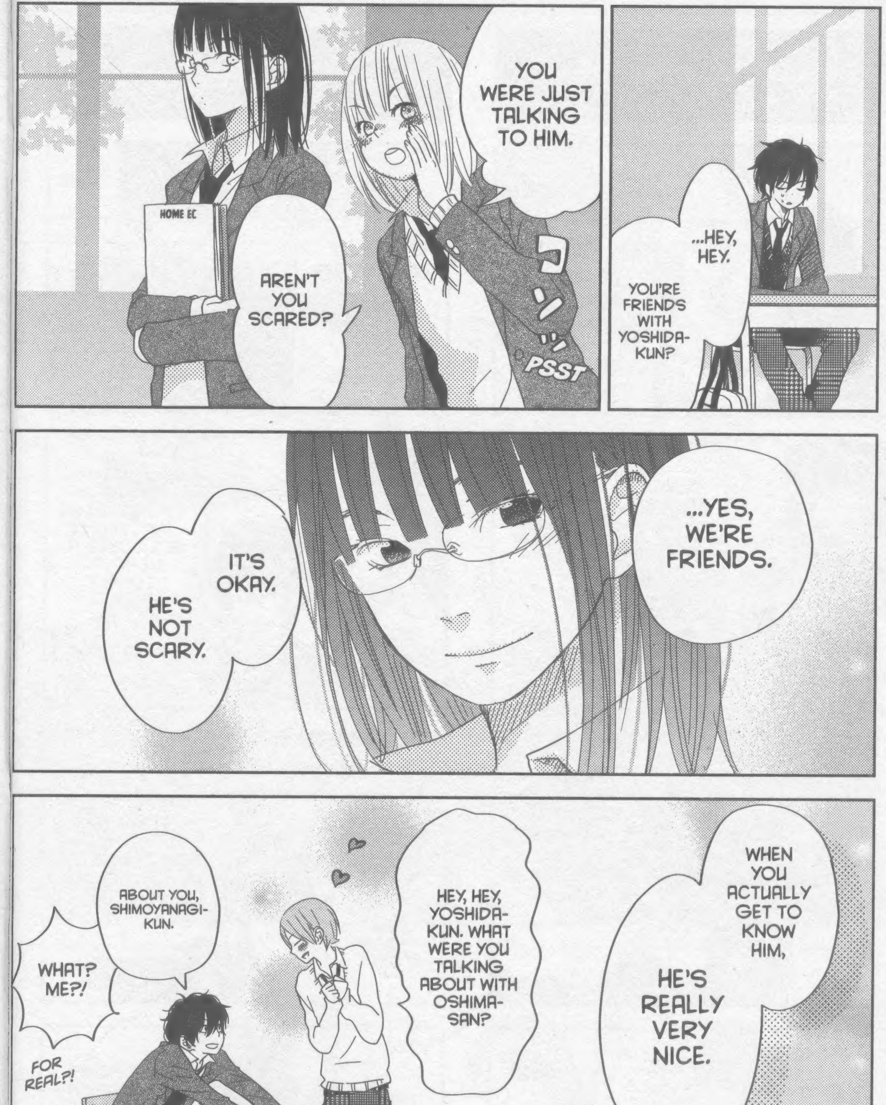
I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS


UGH, LEAVE ME ALONE!
MOUSE
PEOPLE SURE LOVE SHIMO-YANAGI-KUN.
I'M SO JEALOUS.
NOTE: WON'T MOVE AN INCH FROM HIS DESK.
SHIMO-YANAGI-KUN?
YEAH.
WELL, THE YEAR'S ONLY STARTING. LET'S DO OUR BEST SO PEOPLE WILL LOVE US LIKE THAT, TOO.
I WILL. IN FACT, I FINALLY MADE A FRIEND.
WHAT.
OSHIMA-CHAAAN!
LET'S GO!
COMING!
CAN MAKE FRIENDS WITH ANYONE, GIVEN THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY

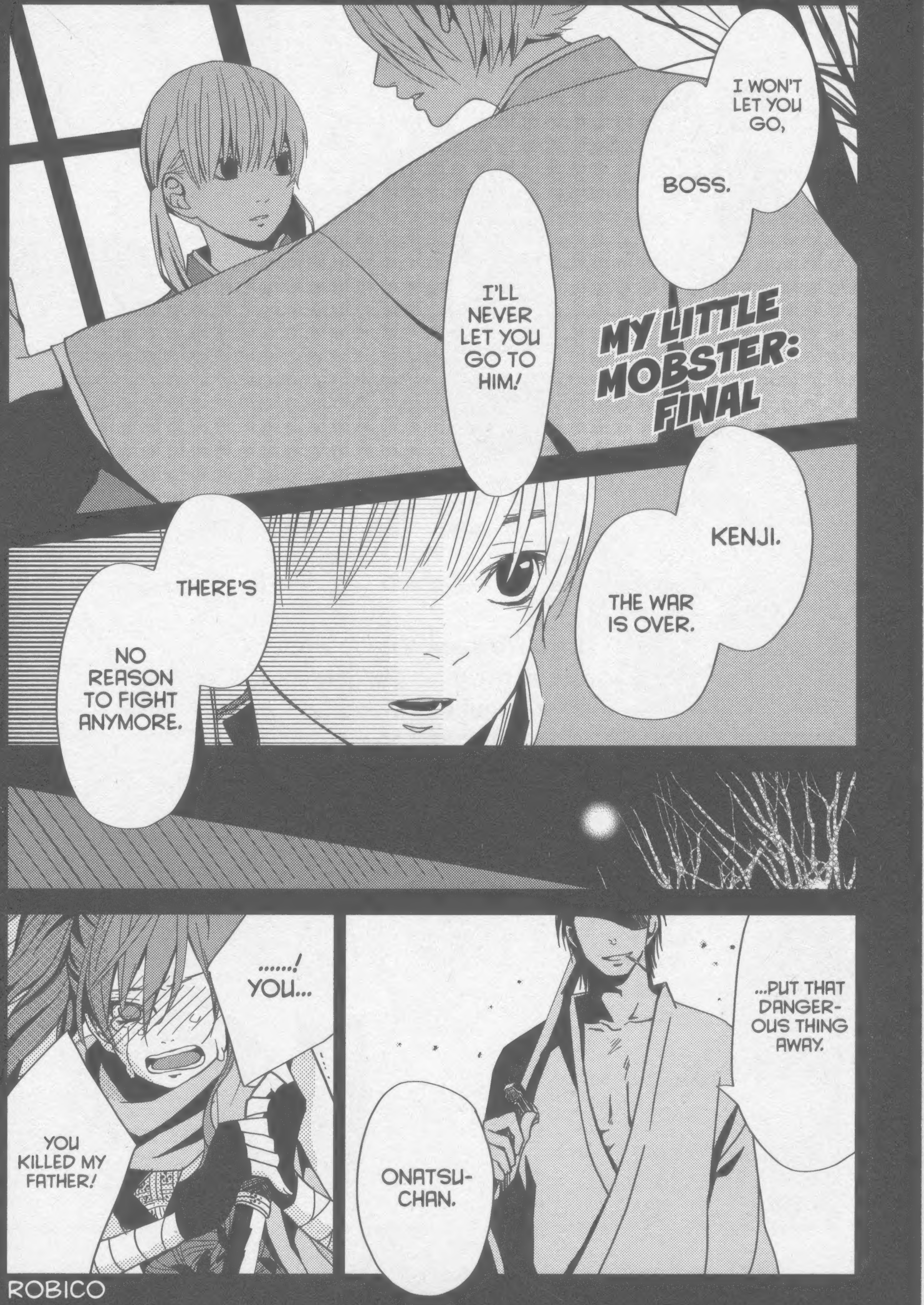


Robico

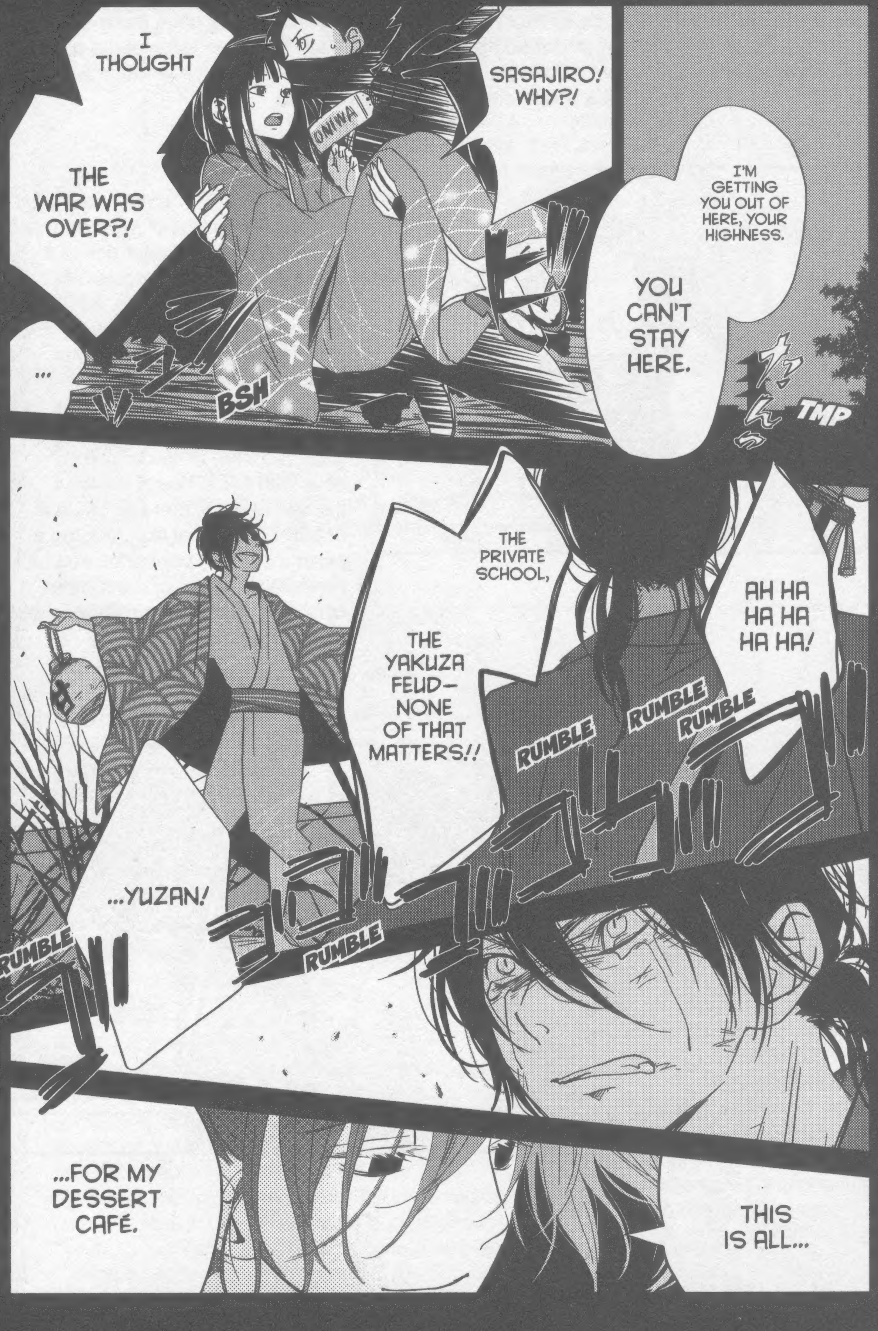
If you're interested in what I do on my days off, I sleep, I think about story, and I draw. Sometimes I go out. It's pretty much like that when I'm working, too. This is volume seven. I hope you enjoy it.


...HEY, HEY.
YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH YOSHIDA-KUN?
YOU WERE JUST TALKING TO HIM.
AREN'T YOU SCARED?
PSST
HOME EC
...YES, WE'RE FRIENDS.
IT'S OKAY.
HE'S NOT SCARY.
WHEN YOU ACTUALLY GET TO KNOW HIM,
HE'S REALLY VERY NICE.
HEY, HEY, YOSHIDA-KUN. WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT WITH OSHIMA-SAN?
ABOUT YOU, SHIMOYANAGI-KUN.
WHAT? ME?!
FOR REAL?!

MY LITTLE MOBSTER: FINAL

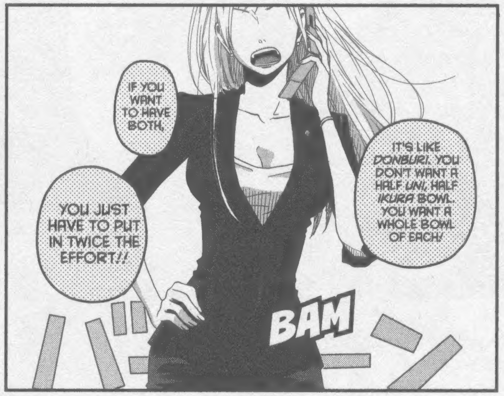

I WON'T LET YOU GO,
BOSS.
I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO TO HIM!
KENJI.
THE WAR IS OVER.
THERE'S
NO REASON TO FIGHT ANYMORE.
...PUT THAT DANGEROUS THING AWAY.
ONATSU-CHAN.
......! YOU...
YOU KILLED MY FATHER!

ROBICO


YOU CAN'T STAY HERE.
I'M GETTING YOU OUT OF HERE, YOUR HIGHNESS.
TMP
SASAJIRO! WHY?!
ONIWA
I THOUGHT
THE WAR WAS OVER?!
...
BSH
AH HA HA HA HA HA!
THE PRIVATE SCHOOL,
THE YAKUZA FEUD—NONE OF THAT MATTERS!!
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
...YUZAN!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
THIS IS ALL...
...FOR MY DESSERT CAFÉ.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

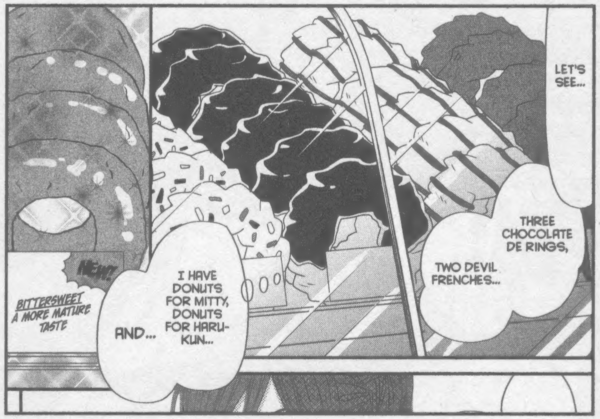

IT'S LIKE DONBURI. YOU DON'T WANT A HALF UNI, HALF IKURA BOWL. YOU WANT A WHOLE BOWL OF EACH!
IF YOU WANT TO HAVE BOTH,
YOU JUST HAVE TO PUT IN TWICE THE EFFORT!!
BAM

Donburi, page 6

Literally meaning "bowl," donburi is basically a meal of meat and vegetables served over rice in a bowl. Because it's the bowl that makes donburi what it is, and not the contents of the bowl, there are many different kinds of donburi. Shizuku's mother's favorite kinds are apparently uni (sea urchin) and ikura (squid). While you can get a nishoku, or "two-colored," bowl with two different proteins, the sad result is that you get less of both. It's kind of like ordering a pizza that's half pepperoni and half Hawaiian, instead of ordering a whole pepperoni pizza and a whole Hawaiian pizza.

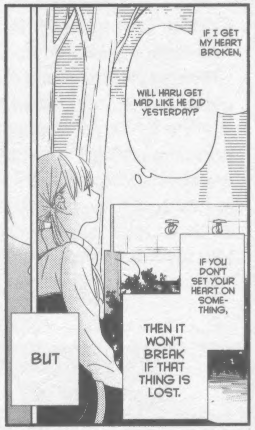
Chocolate de ring and devil French, page 37

Asako's favorite donut franchise is Master Donut, which is her world's version of Mister Donut. Mister Donut's menu includes the Pon de Ring style donut, which looks something like a giant pearl bracelet made of donut holes. The chocolate version is Pon de Chocolat, but at Master Donut, it is Chocolate de Ring. Mister Donut also offers an "angel French," which is a French cruller half-dipped in chocolate. Master Donut appears to prefer the dark side of things.


LET'S SEE...
THREE CHOCOLATE DE RINGS,
TWO DEVIL FRENCHES...
I HAVE DONUTS FOR MITTY, DONUTS FOR HARU-KUN...
AND...
NEW!
BITTERSWEET A MORE MATURE TASTE

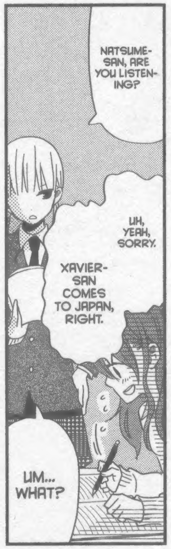
Heartbreak, page 61

The Japanese word for heartbreak, shitsuren, literally means "lost love." So a more literal translation of Shizuku's thoughts would be, "If you don't seek after something, then you never actually lose it," meaning if she doesn't to get love, then she'll never feel the pain of having lost it. The translators altered it slightly to keep the connection with the concept more familiar in an English-speaking setting, a broken heart.


IF I GET MY HEART BROKEN,
WILL HARU GET MAD LIKE HE DID YESTERDAY?
IF YOU DON'T SET YOUR HEART ON SOME-THING,
THEN IT WON'T BREAK IF THAT THING IS LOST.
BUT

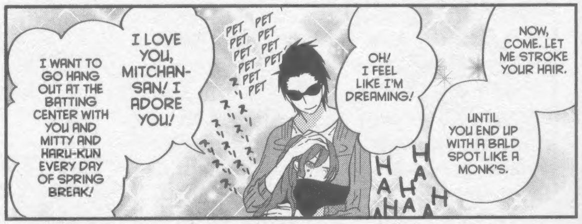
Xavier-san, page 63

This is a reference to Francis Xavier. He was a Jesuit missionary who brought Christianity to Japan in the sixteenth century. Based on Shizuku's reaction to Asako's comment, Shizuku must have been discussing some other part of history when she interrupted Asako's thoughts.


NATSUME-SAN, ARE YOU LISTEN-ING?
UH, YEAH, SORRY.
XAVIER-SAN COMES TO JAPAN, RIGHT.
UM... WHAT?

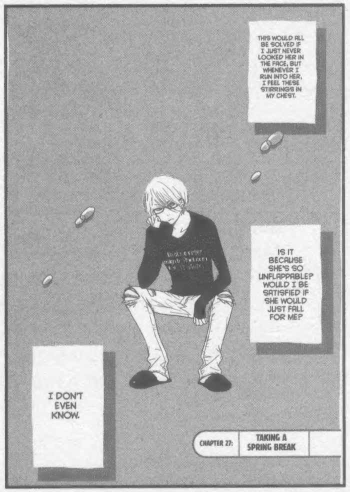
Bald spot like a monk's, page 86

This is a reference to the tonsure, or round shaved head of some Catholic monks. The reference made in the original Japanese was to the supernatural creature known as the kappa, which has a similar bald spot on the top of its head. It may or may not be interesting to note that in Japanese, kappa can also refer to a bob cut.


NOW, COME. LET ME STROKE YOUR HAIR.
UNTIL YOU END UP WITH A BALD SPOT LIKE A MONK'S.
OH! I FEEL LIKE I'M DREAMING!
PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET PET
I LOVE YOU, MITCHAN-SAN! I ADORE YOU!
I WANT TO GO HANG OUT AT THE BATTING CENTER WITH YOU AND MITTY AND HARU-KUN EVERY DAY OF SPRING BREAK!
HAHAHAHAHA

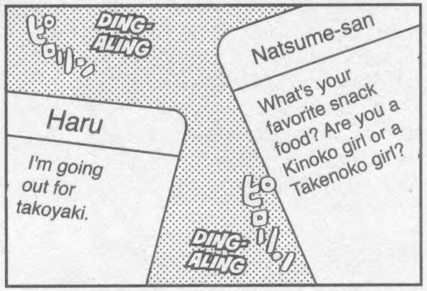
Taking a Spring Break, page 88

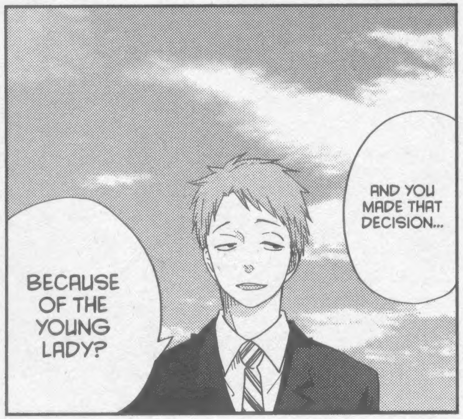
The Japanese title of this chapter is a pun. Literally, it means "spring break," and the word for "spring" is haru, so it's also a Haru break, in accordance with Shizuku's observation that she hasn't spoken to him all vacation. The translators attempted to convey the meaning of "a break from Haru" by making the chapter title "taking a (spring) break," as in a couple who are "taking a break" from each other.


THIS WOULD ALL BE SOLVED IF I JUST NEVER LOOKED HER IN THE FACE, BUT WHENEVER I RUN INTO HER, I FEEL THESE STIRRINGS IN MY CHEST.
IS IT BECAUSE SHE'S SO UNFLAPPABLE? WOULD I BE SATISFIED IF SHE WOULD JUST FALL FOR ME?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW.
CHAPTER 27: TAKING A SPRING BREAK

Kinoko vs. takenoko, page 125

This is a reference to two popular snack foods in Japan, Kinoko no Yama (mushroom mountain) and Takenoko no Sato (home of the bamboo shoots). Kinoko no Yama are little mushroom-shaped cookies, with the stem made out of a breadstick dipped in a chocolate mushroom cap. Takenoko no Sato uses the same concept to make bamboo shoot cookies, but with a slightly different type of breadstick and a different ratio of chocolate to cookie. As Asako's text suggests, everyone has their own preference. But both snacks are made by the same company, so whichever side of the debate you're on, Meiji wins.


DING-ALING
Natsume-san
What's your favorite snack food? Are you a Kinoko girl or a Takenoko girl?
Haru
I'm going out for takoyaki.
DING-ALING

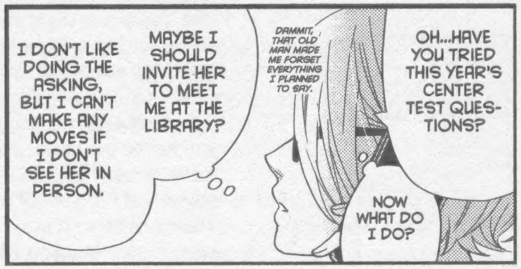

AND YOU MADE THAT DECISION...
BECAUSE OF THE YOUNG LADY?

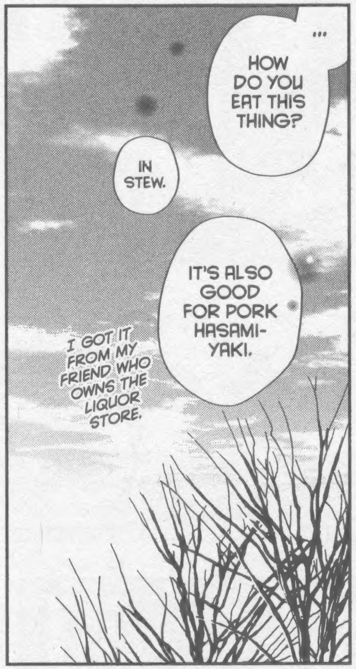
Sly old tanuki, page 131

While Ando's face my remind Haru a little of the stoneware statue that he brought as a gift, Haru is not referring to his looks. In Japanese folklore, tanuki are known for tricking people. Hence, the word "tanuki" is used to describe someone who pretends to be nice and friendly—sometimes naive or foolish—to hide their true, crafty nature.

Center Test questions, page 90

The National Center Test for University Admissions is a Japanese standardized test much like the SATs. After the tests are administered (in mid-January), questions and answers are published in newspapers so students like Shizuku and Yamaken can try the test for themselves and get an idea of what to expect when they take it.


OH...HAVE YOU TRIED THIS YEAR'S CENTER TEST QUESTIONS?
NOW WHAT DO I DO?
DAMMIT, THAT OLD MAN MADE ME FORGET EVERYTHING I PLANNED TO SAY.
MAYBE I SHOULD INVITE HER TO MEET ME AT THE LIBRARY?
I DON'T LIKE DOING THE ASKING, BUT I CAN'T MAKE ANY MOVES IF I DON'T SEE HER IN PERSON.

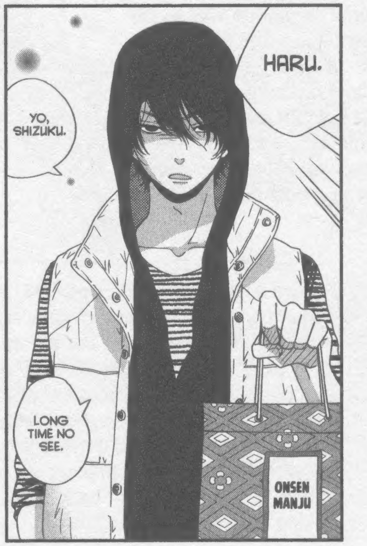

...
HOW DO YOU EAT THIS THING?
IN STEW.
IT'S ALSO GOOD FOR PORK HASAMI-YAKI.
I GOT IT FROM MY FRIEND WHO OWNS THE LIQUOR STORE.

Hasami-yaki, page 95

Hasami-yaki is basically a fried sandwich. Hasami means "to put something [in this case, pork] between two things." Hasami-yaki is often made by putting the meat and other filling between two slices of lotus root and frying the whole sandwich.

Manju, page 114

Manju are a kind Japanese dumpling, with a sweet red bean filling. In this case, Haru bought onsen manju (hot spring manju), which means it was made with wheat flour and brown sugar, and was most likely bought at a hot spring resort.


HARU.
YO, SHIZUKU.
LONG TIME NO SEE.
ONSEN MANJU